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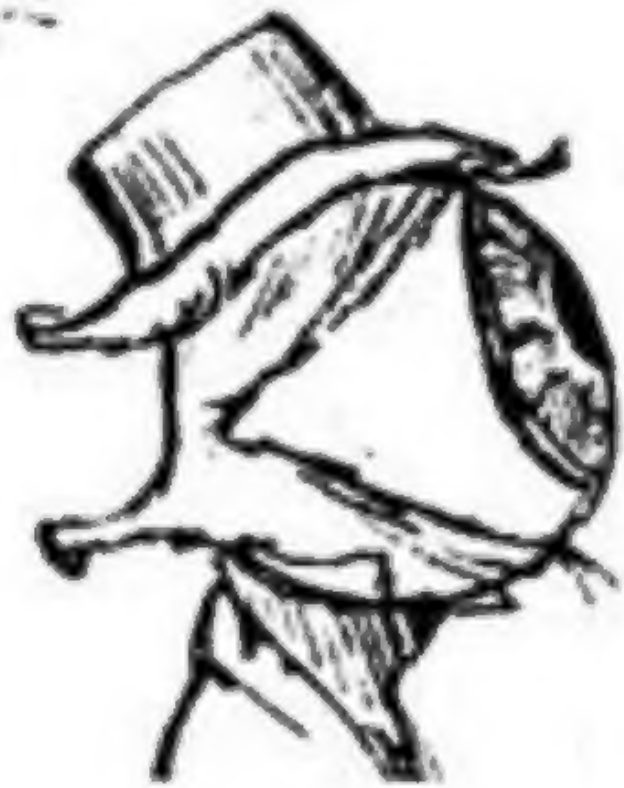

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Visualizing and Visually Representing

SANE journal: Sequential Art Narrative in Education

Volume 1
Issue 3 *Visualizing and Visually Representing*

Article 1

1-1-2013

Introduction: Visualizing and Visually Representing

James Bucky Carter Ph.D.

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Welcome to the third edition of *SANEjournal: sequential art narrative in education*. With this publication, we have renumbered such that this and each subsequent edition will be its own volume, making this issue volume 3.1 and all subsequent issues "3+x.1." Retroactively, volume 1.2 becomes our ex post facto volume 2 but should continue to be cited as 1.2. Initially, we embarked with an ambitious twice-a-year publication goal, but realities have suggested that publishing once annually is the best path for the journal for now. The call for issue 4.1 is under development, and hopefully you'll be with us as we celebrate a new issue each year for years to come.

This issue is themed "Visualizing and Visually Representing" and was guest edited with Katie Monnin of the University of North Florida. Katie has been a leader in the comics and literacy movement at the k-12 level for years and is a dear and trusted colleague of mine, impeccable, passionate, outgoing, and knowledgeable. She often refers to me as her mentor, a kind designation and one that means much to me, especially since I am sure I've learned more from her than I could have ever hoped to offer. Katie also likes to refer to me as her "partner in crime." Indeed, we have worked together on multiple projects and make use of each other's work in our individual projects. She was the primary peer reviewer for this volume, and I feel she's helped us publish an excellent edition that was always intended to connect to the notion of seeing and reseeing, visioning and revisioning. The issue may not have risen to status of criminal (alas!), but the issue represents an important contribution to those considering comics and education, and I am proud of her and to have worked with her on its construction.

Ralph Waldo Emerson uses the metaphor of the Transparent Eyeball as a means of exploring connections between God and nature. It's a strange, paradoxical metaphor. One can easily see where it succeeds as mystic but fails as scientific. How does one *see* if light passes through one's entire body? Isn't human sight based largely on properties of reflection? Emerson's "seeing" is more about experiencing, of course, than about base vision, an extension of the literal, scientific notion of sight into something more akin to understanding; something more akin to transcended comprehension; something more akin to… *literacy.*

I wonder: Do we move closer to the natural, the primal and pure, the essence of god in nature, when we integrate comics in our classrooms? After all, as many have expressed, the distinction between the pictoral and the alphabetic can be viewed as an arbitrary "evolution." Letters are just specialized, signified pictographs or descendents thereof, aren't they? It seems to me that any print-based literacy is visual literacy, even if there appears to be a lack of visual images. One never leaves images even as one "moves on" to "pictureless" books. Indeed, a truly pictureless book would be blank. Really, isn't *all* literacy deeply tied to visual literacy?

Perhaps so, but we know that, over the centuries as we've striven to understand our world, we've created labels and explored genres and mediums and modes and intersections among the labeled, and often we've worked to parcel out niches of human

expression and worked to view each as wholly unique, for better or worse. In the English Language Arts, this division has been clear in what texts and text forms are or have been premiumed over the centuries, what definitions of reading we have favored, and how we've crafted standards to address teaching them.

While much current attention in k-12 ELA pedagogy is wrapped up in deconstructing the prickly Common Core Standards, it is worth noting that in 1996 a group of scholars and teachers from the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English published a set of twelve superb, perfectly fine, broad-based standards that would help teachers address English teaching effectively and progressively. The document they created, *Standards for the English Language Arts,* remains available for free PDF download via NCTE's website even as the Common Core Standards muscle out its predecessors. Part of the authors' work was to form a working definition of "English Language Arts," which they decided included attending to reading, writing, listening, speaking, visualizing and visually representing. That visualizing and visual representation were included specifically is significant (as are the document's definitions of text, reading, literacy, and being literate, but that is a discussion for another time), and it is to those components of the six-pronged definition of ELA that the authors represented in this third issue of *SANEjournal* concentrate.

They ask us to see comics and graphic novels in new ways, to envision and revision our thoughts of how they can be used in classroom settings. The three rationales – for a recent adaptation of *The Prince*, the timely but underappreciated *Zahra's Paradise*, and the classic (dare I say canonical?) *The Dark Knight Returns*, respectively – afford the opportunity to see those comics as having direct pedagogical potentialities. Thanks to Nick Kremer, Hindi Krinsky, and Chris Snellgrove for their contributions. Dr. Monnin and I are pleased to share your work.

In our lead article, "Insights Into Negotiating Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* Using a Literature Cyberlesson," Catherine Kurkjian and Ioulia Kara-Soteriou offer a response to the calls for more research and professional development regarding teaching with comics via an exploration of an action research literacy project largely centered on Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*. Others have written on Tan's exquisite graphic novel in educational settings, but Kurkjian and Kara-Soteriou offer a significant revisioning and expansion of that budding opus. Jeraldine Kraver attempts to bring together what she calls the "piecemeal effect" of comics-and-literacy scholarship and research in her article "Reinventing the Composition Classroom, or How *Making Comics* Can Clarify the Composing Process." Between these articles, Belinda S. Zimmerman and Sharon D. Kruse offer a call to action in "The Fluency Development Lesson Gets Graphic." Within they ask teachers to consider comics and graphic novels as means to advance student comprehension.

It is my hope that these three articles and three rationales do indeed spark a call to action, one that continues to move us toward greater integration of the comics medium into various educational platforms across the globe. As we celebrate the third issue of *SANEjournal*, remember that the journal remains free, open-access, and an internet

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connection away from affordable, quality professional development for teachers, researchers, and educators. As always, I hope you enjoy your reading experience.

Sincerely,

James Bucky Carter, Ph.D.,
Editor and Founder

SANE journal: Sequential Art Narrative in Education

Volume 1
Issue 3 *Visualizing and Visually Representing*

Article 2

1-1-2013

Insights Into Negotiating Shaun Tan's The Arrival Using a Literature Cyberlesson

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Insights Into Negotiating Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* Using a Literature Cyberlesson

By Catherine Kurkjian and Julia Kara-Soteriou, Central Connecticut State University

> I suspect that I might not have read *The Arrival* with the appreciation and depth of understanding that is required. I may have underestimated the richness and complexities of graphic wordless novels for children. I've since witnessed other adults read my copy of the book, marveling at the illustrations, yet moving quickly through it. There are so many details and symbolic meanings, that this "children's" book is deceiving. It must be read slowly, contemplated, scrutinized. Simply put, I might have missed a lot…

This comment was made by a teacher who participated in a reflective inquiry project focusing on Shaun Tan's award winning graphic novel, *The Arrival* (2010). Her response reflects the visual complexity and multifaceted nature of this text and is characteristic of the responses one could expect for wordless graphic novels. In fact, it is argued that these texts require a substantial degree of reader participation for narrative interpretation (Chute, 2008; Wolk, 2007). Further, as Will Eisner (1985) comments, "…while they [wordless books] seem to represent a more primitive form of graphic narrative, [they] really require some sophistication on the part of the reader (viewer). Common experience and a history of observation are necessary to interpret the inner feelings of the actor" (p. 24).

Whether visual narratives are referred to as graphic novels, picture books, sequential visual art with supporting text, or wordless books, these engaging texts have quickly taken hold, and increasingly there has been a blurring of lines among and between these formats (Evans 2011; Foster, 2011). Discussion surrounding the need for professional development for teachers in the mediation of these texts abound (Eckert, 2010; Hughes, King, Perkins, & Fuke, 2011; Kelley, 2011) as well as calls for research surrounding effective ways to use these books (Bitz, 2010; Callahan, 2009; Carter, 2007b; Cooper, Nesmith, & Schwarz, 2011; Gavigan, 2011, Monnin, 2009).

Our descriptive study is a response to these calls. It examines both the textual challenges and supports that Tan's *The Arrival* poses and the ways in which an Internet-based instructional framework supported or detracted from the viewer's understanding of the text. The research questions that guided the study were the following:

1. How did the images support and challenge the viewer's understanding of the visual narrative?
2. In what ways did the implementation of the instructional sequence support and challenge the viewer?

Background and Theoretical Framework

This investigation is grounded in a social constructivist theory in which social

interactions, the cultural context, and cultural tools play a key role in scaffolding learning. Key assumptions are that (a) written and oral language are integrated, (b) learning is a social activity, and (c) learners are actively engaged in constructing meaning (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2001). Within this framework the Internet and other computer mediated networks can be seen as "cultural tools" (Vygotsky, 1962) that individuals might use to mediate meaning. In fact, an emerging new literacies theory is directly aligned with the view that the Internet and other Informational Communication Technologies are tools that scaffold inquiry. These technological tools support the identification of important questions, the location of information, the critical evaluation of the usefulness of that information, the synthesis of information to answer those questions, and then the communication of the answers to others (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004).

This study is also informed by reader response theory espoused by Louise Rosenblatt (1994/1978) in which reading is seen as a transaction between text and reader. From this perspective, meaning does not solely reside in the text; instead the "poem" is an act of construction of meaning as the reader brings to bear background and aesthetic response in interaction and under the guidance of the text. Iser's (1978) notion of Implied Reader versus an Actual Reader gives credence to the reader as an active constructor of meaning who fills perceived blanks in texts by bringing lived experiences to bear in the reading of the text. For these theorists, certain interpretations of text are more credible than others given that the structure of the text created by the author/illustrator plays a key role in shaping comprehension as the reader interacts with the text (Rosenblatt, 1995; Ward, 2006). Thus, this may involve close readings of the text to find evidence to support an interpretation.

Visual narratives pose unique comprehension challenges to readers. It is argued that visual formats have prominent gaps and that more information is omitted than is included (Wolk, 2007). The reader literally reads between the juxtaposed panels and gutters (the spaces between panels) and traverses back and forth recursively to make sense of the images and text. This process calls upon the reader to bring to bear topical knowledge and structural conventions, such as panels, panel borders, use of the gutter, time, and motion, as well as the visual elements that illustrators use.

Methodology

This descriptive teacher inquiry made use of principles of action research (Creswell, 2008) where a problem is identified and possible solutions are implemented and then studied through systematic collection and analysis of data. The researcher, a university professor, intended to provide an instructional intervention that would make the study of a complex visual narrative more accessible to its viewers. Participants were classroom teachers pursuing a graduate degree in reading and language arts. Twenty-one of them were enrolled in a language arts course and 19 were enrolled in a multicultural literature course. Most of the participants met with the instructor in a computer lab setting equipped with individual computers and an LCD projector for whole class viewing. The remaining teachers met in a classroom equipped with Internet access, overhead projector, document camera, and instructor's computer connected to LCD projector. All participants had Internet access at home and/or in their respective schools.

The instructional intervention for the participants in each course spanned three weeks and the data was gathered across three semesters. Data sources included the instructor's classroom field

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notes, open-ended focus group interviews, blog postings, and work samples. All were analyzed with the objective to describe identifiable patterns and subcategories organized into representational categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The analysis was a recursive process in which artifacts were examined by research questions and by stages of the instructional sequence. For each round of analysis, categories were compared and contrasted, revised and/or refined to capture challenges and supports posed by the text within the different phases of the instructional sequence. Additionally, keeping the same research questions in mind two participating teachers modified and implemented an almost identical instructional intervention and conducted parallel inquiries within their own classroom settings (grade 2 and grade 7 remedial reading). Findings from these separate inquiries are integrated within the discussion section of this paper.

The Text and the Instructional Framework

With a focus on immigration, Shaun Tan's wordless graphic novel, *The Arrival*, served as the centerpiece of this research project. *The Arrival* has been described as an "intellectual masterpiece" that gives the reader the gift of seeing things through the eyes of an immigrant (Carter, 2007a). The series of wordless drawings in sepia document the story of the main character, who leaves his home and family to embark on an immigration journey that leads him to become a stranger in a very strange land. Images are at once historic, yet futuristic, realistic yet surrealistic. In combination, Tan communicates both a sense of time and of timelessness, of place and of placelessness, that serve to heighten the "strangeness" of the situation and its applicability to an "everyperson."

Tan's *The Arrival* was taught with the use of a Literature Cyberlesson, an Internet-based instructional framework originally designed by Tancock (2001). The Literature Cyberlesson was subsequently refined and modified in light of teacher research projects that explored its efficacy as an Internet instructional framework in supporting teaching fiction and content area reading (Kurkjian, 2006; Kurkjian & Kara-Soteriou, 2008) and as a vehicle to heighten critical literacy in a remedial reading high school classroom (Howard-Bender & Mulcahy, 2007). This method framework has similarities to the Directed Reading Activity (Betts, 1946) framework along with many of its reincarnations, such as Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), and with some instructional routines, such as the KWL (Ogle, 1986) and the Anticipation Reaction Guide (Head & Readence, 1992).

While these frameworks are used in various ways and for various purposes, what they have in common is the effort to systematically guide readers through a text by (a) activating and/or building background knowledge, (b) helping the reader to generate a purpose for reading and to monitor comprehension in light of this purpose, and (c) encouraging the reader to rethink and revisit the text for various purposes to enhance comprehension. The reading activities selected to scaffold comprehension through various phases of the text depend on a variety of factors which include the reader, the purpose for reading, the demands of the text, and the context of the situation.

Unlike the print-based versions of these earlier frameworks, the Literature Cyberlesson systematically capitalizes on the resources of the Internet and other information and communication technologies to support comprehension before, during, and after the reading of a text. These may include video, audio, multiple texts and graphics, interactive websites, blogs,

wikis, and email. When developing a Literature Cyberlesson, one could present it as a webpage with links to the different online resources and new technologies or as a highly engaging PowerPoint presentation with several hyperlinks and extensive use of multimedia. A major characteristic of the Literature Cyberlesson is the presentation of the instructional content in four major phases: The Before Reading Phase, the During Reading Phase, the After Reading Phase, and the Beyond Reading Phase. All phases engage the reader in activities that require the use of Internet and other new technologies with the objective to provide a deeper understanding of the text. This is the format that was also followed for the development and implementation of The Arrival Literature Cyberlesson.

Instructional Objectives

The Arrival Literature Cyberlesson aligns with broad standards, as well as specific elements of the standards, across varying professional roles as derived from the revised standards of the International Reading Association (IRA) (International Reading Association, 2010). The Arrival Literature Cyberlesson was designed to help the participants consider the challenges of negotiating and comprehending visual narratives themselves and to inform them about ways they might scaffold comprehension of these engaging formats in their own classrooms. It was also designed to help teachers consider the multicultural nature of our American experience and to empathize with those who came before us and with those who are newcomers. Another intent was to provide the participants with an opportunity to experience and consider the use of the Literature Cyberlesson in their own classrooms as a framework that embeds technology into curriculum. More specifically, instructional goals of The Arrival Literature Cyberlesson included:

- To heighten readers' sensitivity to diverse groups of people in our global society and to experience the common bonds of humanity we have with immigrant populations through the vehicle of Tan's graphic *The Arrival* (addressing the 2010 IRA Standard 4: Diversity).
- To increase readers' awareness of literacy strategies involved in making sense of a graphic novel (addressing the 2010 IRA Standard 1: Foundational Knowledge).
- To enhance understanding of the impact of a Literature Cyberlesson on reading comprehension of a graphic novel (addressing 2010 IRA Standard 1: Foundational Knowledge; Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction; Standard 3: Assessment and Evaluation).

Before Reading Phase of Implementation

The Before Reading activities were implemented during class time in a collaborative manner. The first slide to The Arrival Literature Cyberlesson created an anticipatory set about what was to come (Introduction slide); whereas the second informed the participants about which materials were required to complete the lesson (Materials slide). Participants then worked in teams to view and to discuss selected images from *The Arrival* presented on an online site. Students worked together to make inferences about what was happening and then made predictions about what they thought would happen based on the selected online images (Before Reading Slides). This was followed by a whole class discussion in which participants revisited online images and subsequently rethought their interpretations in light of visual structural conventions. Finally, in

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this phase participants accessed an Ellis Island website and made entries in a reader response journal about what they learned as well as any connections they made to *The Arrival*.

The Before Reading phase served as an effective way to launch students in deciphering the abstract nature of this wordless text. In each of the class sessions social interaction was a key category. These interactions facilitated the process of 1) bringing background knowledge and topical knowledge to bear, and 2) highlighting textual conventions. The second salient category emerged in relationship to the availability of the resources of the Internet. When students posed questions the resources of the Internet facilitated inquiry and enriched the conversations.

An example of social interactions and conversations regarding the fantastical nature of Tan's images viewed on the Vulture website (New York Media, 2007) transpired in one class prior to previewing the Ellis Island website. The questions they posed and the availability of the Internet as a tool facilitated their inquiry and classroom discussion.

> **Class Discussion Anecdote: Student 1 (S1)**: I don't like that he (Tan) included fantasy images. I don't like them. They are so strange and distracting. **S2**: I agree. They are so strange. I see images that clearly look like Ellis Island, like Grand Central Station but some of the images are confusing. **S3**: Hmm- maybe these strange images show how strange it must seem to come to a new land. I think that is why they are included. **Professor:** Did you ever travel somewhere and see animals that seemed fantastical to you? When I was in Korea in 2008 I went to a fish market and I saw fish that were totally fantastical to me. **S1:** I wonder if the animals in the text resemble any animals in Australia since the author is from there. (fieldnotes)

In the quest to understand why Tan chose to include fantastical elements in *The Arrival*, participants went through a process referred to as "unpacking" (Burmark, 2008) in which the reader responds to and asks certain questions about an image. In this case the participants were questioning why Tan chose to incorporate fantastical elements in his images and reflected on the degree to which Tan's Australian background impacted his choice of these images. Participants understood at some level that authors often draw on their own lived experiences and so, before actually reading the text, they used the resources of the Internet to find pictures of Australian animals and located images of bandicoots, wombats, and numbats to see if these Australian creatures shared similar features of the fantastical creature pictured on the cover of the text. This inquiry launched them on a journey of sorting out what images were rooted in reality and speculation as to why Tan chose to present images in the way he did.

Conversations in response to the shared viewing of the Vulture website also focused on visual conventions that Tan used. Participants speculated on the symbolic nature of images, Tan's use of size, shape, light and dark and the juxtaposition of various images and the way they expressed meaning. In most cases these conversations originated with the participants. The professor researcher would then pose questions that were intended to facilitate their thinking about the use of visual cues that Tan used to carry meaning.

During Reading Phase of Implementation

The During Reading phase was done independently at home where the participants still had online access to The Arrival Literature Cyberlesson. First, participants were asked to call to mind what they knew about the text and make predictions based on their background knowledge. As they viewed the images in the text they kept a dual entry journal in which they tracked and responded to realistic and surreal images. On one side of the journal they listed and responded to realistic images and on the other side they listed and responded to the fantastical ones. This assignment was intended to help participants monitor their thinking about what was happening in the story and to invite interpretation based on structural cues.

Analysis of the data from the dual entry journals indicated that they varied in detail as well as in the number of entries made. The majority of entries were interpretive while others were descriptive and/or literal lists of the images. Some interpretive comments involved noticing repeated images, and/or intertextuality among images, attributing meaning based on Tan's juxtaposition of one image in relationship to another. Other interpretations addressed Tan's use of size and symbolism, and included comments on Tan's use of dark and light, use of size, and use of repeated images to highlight and foreshadow ideas. Depending on the images selected, interpretations reflected the ability to understand Tan's visual cues to show flashbacks, as well as the passage of time (On the next page, Figure 1 provides a sample of interpretive responses to selected images).

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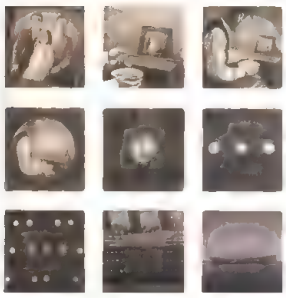
Figure 1. During Reading Responses on Foreshadowing and Juxtaposition

Repeated images, symbolism and foreshadowing

These creatures hovering before his booth lands remind me of the paper doves that the man makes with his daughter. Is this foreshadowing that he will be reconnected with his family, or that they are watching over him?

Juxtaposed images

The photos of the man in the window of his ship make me think of how he is about to become one of the masses of people immigrating. No one will care about his particular story, and he will blend in with all of those trying to escape.



Images reproduced with permission from THE ARRIVAL by Shaun Tan, Lothian Children's Books, an imprint of Hachette Australia, 2006.

After Reading Phase of Implementation

Designed to be completed independently, the After Reading phase aimed to help students revisit their observations in the During Reading phase in order to think more deeply about the text. This entailed revisiting of the dual entry journal to put together what went on in the story and to use evidence collected to write about the theme of the text and to post a review of the book on a class blog. Participants accessed online book reviews of *The Arrival*, viewed Tan's website and listened to a podcast interview with Shaun Tan on another site. Students were then given only an abbreviated opportunity to share in class prior to moving on to the last phase of the Literature Cyberlesson implementation, the Beyond Reading phase.

When the participants' written materials were collected and analyzed it was found that the reviews of Tan's book varied in sophistication. However, the majority addressed the main theme and provided evidence from images to support their interpretations. The range of themes encompassed the following ideas:

- *The experiences that immigrants go through as they transition from the familiar to the unknown and the resulting feelings of fear, confusion, isolation and loneliness that are the outgrowth of these experiences…*

- *Finding where you belong and fitting in…*
- *Overcoming hardships and unfamiliarity in new situations to become stronger and thrive as a family…*
- *Paying tribute to immigrants who journey on the wings of hope (paper birds)…*
- *Pondering what it took for us to get where we are today, just as the man on the front of the book appears to be pondering the image of the peculiar animal that, unbeknownst to him, would soon become his faithful companion.*
- *Helping others. To survive in this new place he needs the help of others…*
- *There is a face behind every statistic. Shaun Tan seems to show us both how this man can be lost in the masses and how each person has a story of their own….*
- *Relating to all sorts of human beings no matter what background or race because our emotions are so similar…*
- *Understanding the reasons why many people emigrated from their homelands…*

In one class there was evidence that one participant missed an important aspect of the visual text. In this case the participant did not seem to notice the time shifts in which characters in the stories had flashbacks to their own experience. Instead she interpreted these events as occurring in the present. From this we learned that it was important to provide a time for class discussion focusing more systematically on visual conventions. Additionally, discussion time immediately following the During Reading Phase would allow for informal assessment and teacher modeling of thinking about structural aspects of the text (Fisher & Frey, 2009) to better support comprehension.

Likewise, providing a social forum to discuss the text following the After Reading phase gave the students an opportunity to delve deeper into their interpretations, and to use Internet resources to investigate the validity of their ideas. Below is an anecdote of one salient conversation when time was provided for discussion.

> **Anecdote: S1**: I studied in Australia and when I viewed the image of the one legged soldier facing the town that has been devastated by war, I thought of the song *Waltzing Matilda*. I went online at home because somewhere I remembered that it had some association to war. Here is the link I found. (The link was accessed to view the lyrics of a variation of Waltzing *Matilda* entitled *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* with antiwar lyrics.) (fieldnotes)

In response to this participant's insight, the class researched further and learned that this song is sometimes associated with the Battle of Gallipoli during World War I. The participants wondered if perhaps the images of the one legged soldier depicted in *The Arrival* had been influenced by the devastation of the Battle of Gallipoli during WWI in which so many Australian soldiers lost their lives. We accessed a video of Liam Clancy singing *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (Mitchmallow, 2008). The soldier in the song tells us of how he lost his legs and "that there are worse things than dying." He goes on to sing "A man needs both legs, no more waltzing Matilda for me." As we reviewed the images of war we wondered if Tan had been influenced by this important piece of Australian history. Participants began to question Tan's purpose for including these images and wondered if he was presenting an antiwar stance by creating these evocative images of the devastation of war. Thus, they were able to

hypothesize about underlying beliefs embedded in the text which provided participants with more agency of their own reading experience (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Boatright, 2010).

This anecdote demonstrates the power of social interaction in the co-construction of meaning and how the "whole can be more than the sum of its parts." Through group interaction, new knowledge and insights were collaboratively constructed that went beyond any single individual's initial understanding. We see here that students are "stepping outside of the text" and beginning to take a critical stance in understanding that all texts are constructed from a particular viewpoint (Hobbs, as cited in Frey & Fisher, 2008). This anecdote also demonstrates how the availability of the Internet and its multimedia resources supported and facilitated inquiry at the point of need.

Beyond Reading Phase of Implementation

The Beyond Reading phase entailed having the participants read two of three selected books that deal with immigration (*Maggie's Amerikay* by Barbara Timberlake Russell, *Letters from Rifka* by Karen Hesse, and *The Memory Coat* by Elvira Woodruff) in order to encourage across text connections to *The Arrival*. Next, participants interviewed a friend or a family member who had immigrated to the United States and then using the knowledge and insights gained from the interview they created a paper or electronic scrapbook that an immigrant might have made about his/her journey to a new country. Participants created a backstory of the person whose scrapbook they made and shared their scrapbooks with the rest of the class.

In reading the two selected books the participants were encouraged to make intertextual connections and then to revisit *The Arrival* with new insights. Some participants found that the reading of the texts broadened their understanding of *The Arrival*, in essence putting more "meat on the bones" of the visual images. For example, in response to *Letters from Rifka* and *The Memory Coat* one participant commented that reading these books helped to provide her with a sense of the individual when she revisited Tan's image of Examination Hall at Ellis Island in *The Arrival*, an image depicting masses of people being processed in the holding area. Another participant commented that *Letters from Rifka* helped to dispel the idea that all immigrants were illiterate. She pointed out that the letters which characters wrote to each other included quotes from Pushkin, a Russian poet and novelist. Other participants became more aware of the trauma immigrants experienced passing through Ellis Island. One participant commented, "The fear that immigrants felt must have been numbing. So much is at stake and there are so many steps that one little misstep can wreck it all." Other themes across texts included varying reasons why people immigrate, the feelings of isolation immigrants felt, the importance of family, the determination and resiliency of characters, and awareness that some immigrants experienced having a foot in each land noting that they were "living in a limbo-like existence" until they were able to adjust.

By juxtaposing other texts with *The Arrival*, a critical stance was encouraged as participants uncovered their assumptions about immigrants and became more aware of the complexity of immigration (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). While the selected texts did present a more complex view of immigrants and immigration, they primarily presented a turn of the century Western European worldview. In a critical analysis of three graphic novels, one of which is *The Arrival*, Boatright (2010) questions ideologies underlying views of the immigration that are presented. He argues that *The Arrival* depicts a view of what is referred to as the "good

immigrant" narrative, which is typically associated with Western European upwardly mobile immigrants who pursue and ultimately achieve the "American Dream." Boatright suggests that teachers can use this narrative to help students examine the power relations that exist between readers and authors. He recommends that teachers work with students to investigate the hows and whys of immigrant narratives. In retrospect, the conscious inclusion of texts with a balance of female and male protagonists from recent multiracial and multiethnic backgrounds might have served to facilitate such a discussion and to help readers to develop a more complex and critical understanding of immigration.

During the Beyond Reading Phase participants interviewed a wide range of people and at times told their own story of immigration. Some interviewed their parents and relatives. Others met with parents of their students, colleagues, friends, and neighbors. Some told stories of middle class people who spoke English; others about emigrating from rural to urban areas. There were interviews of people who immigrated to the United States over a generation ago, and there were interviews with recently immigrated people. There were stories of people who came from poverty seeking a better life, and stories of middle class professional people who wanted to take advantage of economic opportunities. There were other stories of escape from persecution and political strife. The interview of immigrants and the presentation of a scrapbook, in particular, appeared to be evocative and memorable. A representative comment about the power of this aspect of the Literature Cyberlesson follows:

> The most evocative part of the cyberlesson was the creation of the Electronic Scrapbook. I chose to create my scrapbook based on my father's immigration to the United States from Sicily in the 1950s. The scrapbook gave me the opportunity to interview my father and take his personal experiences of being new to a new and "strange" land and translate them into connections to *The Arrival*. I valued the chance to take photographs and his personal memories and create a special artifact for myself and my father. (online blog)

The scrapbook component of the Beyond Reading Phase was designed to make immigration more personal to the participants and to transfer what they had learned about immigration to something more personal. Below is an anecdote from one of the many moving stories that participants chose to share.

> **Anecdote:** As she sat there sharing her scrapbook with the class we saw real photos from a family album. Tears were in her eyes as she revealed that indeed this was the story of her own family and the character she portrayed was a holocaust survivor who fled her homeland to come to the US to escape persecution. She talked about the challenges and joys that this character faced in her new life in her new land. At the end of her presentation, many of us in the class had been moved to tears. (fieldnotes)

When the participants reviewed what they learned from the range of presentations it appeared as though their conceptions of what it means to be a stranger in a strange land had been broadened. One student noted that the stories of the people in *The Arrival* became the stories of real people.

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Conclusions

Research question number one considers how the images in *The Arrival* support and challenge the viewer's understanding of the visual narrative. In summary, Tan provided a variety of visual cues that both supported and challenged comprehension at times. The cues conveyed information about literary elements such as setting and timeframe, foreshadowing, flashbacks, and symbolism. We found that he did this through his use of color, of dark and light, intertextuality of images on a single page and across chapters, and through the repetition of images, size, shape and perspective. For example, participants understood how the sequence of images portrayed the changes of seasons, how use of color signaled flashbacks, and how the use of light and dark was used to convey danger, foreboding and/or hope. They also understood that repetitive images appearing through the text had a symbolic meaning. While visual cues provided support to intended meaning, we also learned these cues could pose challenges for those who did not notice them or were unable to interpret them.

Research question number two considers the ways the implementation of the Literature Cyberlesson supported and challenged the viewer. In our analysis of the instructional sequence we concluded there was a lack of systematic instruction and assessment that focused on visual conventions. We only discovered this during the After Reading phase when participants' work was analyzed. We learned that more direct instruction with teacher modeling of thinking about structural aspects of the text (Fisher & Frey, 2009) along with discussion time following the During Reading phase would have better supported comprehension.

Three salient aspects of the implementation appeared to enhance comprehension. First, the chance for peer collaboration, social interaction and discussion, when provided, helped expand the reading of the text. It offered participants the opportunity to linger over the text, revisit sections, and pool interpretations and background knowledge. Moreover, the sharing of projects gave participants the opportunity to learn about a wide range of immigration stories personal to their classmates. Second, the availability of the Internet allowed discussions to turn into inquiry. Participants were actively pursuing their questions and would then bring information back to the class for more discussion and interpretation. Third, the opportunity to make learning personal appeared to engage participants and make learning about immigrants relevant to their own lives. In particular the Beyond Reading phase lent itself to the transfer of understanding to other related contexts.

Martínez-Roldán and Newcomer (2011) report similar findings in their study that describes the interpretive processes immigrant children ages 10-11 engaged in as they made sense of *The Arrival*. The researchers point to the social nature of the students' interpretive work. The children drew on personal experiences of immigration and their background knowledge, and engaged in inquiry in the form of hypotheses generation as they worked together to co-construct meaning by sharing resources, questions and strategies. The power of "social interactions" via discussion and the idea of making learning personal echos in the work of Gomes and Carter (2010), as well. In their study ninth grade students in a special education English class, who typically have difficulty engaging in face-to face, found a "safe house" via the communication tools of the Internet when responding to Yang's (2006) graphic novel *American Born Chinese*. Within the context of the "safe house" of a blog in which they conversed with each other and with Yang, learning became both personal and relevant as the students shared their sometimes very personal experiences of not fitting in. Similar to our study, the role of the Internet was

prominent in supporting inquiry and close reading of the text.

In pooling and analyzing data with the two participating teachers who implemented and analyzed The Arrival Literature Cyberlesson in grades 2 and 7 (Kurkjian, Lynch, & Billings, 2009; Kurkjian & Billings, 2010) we found a convergence in terms of what we learned in the development and implementation of our respective Arrival Literature Cyberlessons. We learned that one size does not fit all. The ways in which we implemented our Literature Cyberlessons varied considerably according to our contexts, grade levels, student needs, purposes and curriculum. However, we found that each of our Literature Cyberlessons benefited our students and assisted our instructional purposes by slowing things down and providing an opportunity for close readings. We found that availability of technological tools played a key role in our design. Each of us found the role of social interaction as a key benefit of the Literature Cyberlesson in that the Cyberlesson provided a forum to share interpretations.

We noted that the extent of teacher support varied across all levels but still needed to be there, even with graduate students, during the Before Reading phase. We also agreed on the need to incorporate ongoing informal assessments by monitoring participant artifacts accompanied by timely interventions, such as teacher modeling and think alouds, and discussions. This would allow a more systematic intervention at the point of need. Each of us provided companion textual information (books, websites, multimedia information) and this was thought to play an important role in teaching concepts and in broadening understanding. Each of us found that making it personal to our students, whether through scrapbooks, visitors, or blogging with immigrants brought *The Arrival* and the topic of immigration to life.

In conclusion, while we found room for improvement, the Literature Cyberlesson appears to be a viable and promising way to guide comprehension before, during, after, and beyond the reading of graphic novels like *The Arrival*. Features that appear to support comprehension within the structure of Literature Cyberlesson when in evidence included (a) the provision of systematic instruction and ongoing assessment of textual features, (b) the allowance for social interaction and discussion in which learners can inquire and co construct hypotheses, (c) the affordance of the tools of the Internet to inquire at the point of need, and (d) the opportunity to revisit and transfer learning in a way that is relevant to the experiences of learners.

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The Fluency Development Lesson Gets Graphic

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The Fluency Development Lesson Gets Graphic

By Belinda S. Zimmerman[1], Kent State University, and Sharon D. Kruse, TheUniversity of Akron

Introduction

Over centuries, in the western world, the ability to read and to read well has opened doors for generations of students, citizens and professionals. Long considered a cornerstone of the educated, the ability to read with prosody, to stir the emotions of a crowd and to captivate the imagination of others with words has separated castes and classes, and conferred status and social standing. Yet, reading well does not come easily.

Formal entry into reading for most children has been marked by instruction in phonics, spelling, grammar, handwriting, vocabulary and comprehension. The typical beginning reader text is illustrated and the pictures serve to help the young (or novice) reader make sense of the words on the page. Early readers view illustrations as part of the text, reading them for meaning, nuance and detail. Until novice readers are taught to view text and illustration as separate, both can contribute to the act known as reading. Current graphic novel scholarship suggests that reading illustrations and text together as complementary textual features, motivates modern readers.

The introduction of the graphic novel into classroom curriculum and instruction challenges these conventions and formats by asking the reader to read both the illustration and the written word to develop insight and meaning, comprehension and understanding. By reintroducing the visual as an essential and fundamental part of the text, the graphic novel requires scholars to question the long held assumptions that underscore how written text is defined and presented (Kress, 2000; Monnin, 2011; Myers, 1996). Graphic novels also challenge assumptions about what makes text *text* and what reading text means in the socially constructed context of the classroom. As Monnin (2011) argues, literacy in the new media age requires that teachers shift instruction to include integrated visually-based English Language Arts pedagogy. As Kress (2003, p.1) notes, "The world told is a different world to the world shown." By approaching literacy learning as simultaneously text- and image-based, literacy requires readers to be able to co-create meaning from both print and illustration concurrently. In this paper, we explore the use of graphic novels in middle school settings and offer scholars in the field and classroom teachers alike insights into how the graphic novel can be employed to motivate and engage readers of all levels.

Literature Review

This article is intended to be useful for both practitioners and scholars in the field of literacy. In as much as veterans of the format already possess a working definition of related key terminology, we believe it is important to set forth both definitions of and assumptions about

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literacy its relationship to the graphic novel format. It is hoped that these clarifications might broaden the discussion about the use of graphic novels in schools, particularly in language arts classrooms. We begin by discussing and defining the graphic novel.

Graphic Novels

Although books and comics have enjoyed a longstanding publishing history and are increasingly legitimatized in school and society on a daily basis, the format of graphic novels is still a relatively new and developing enterprise in American culture and the literacy curriculum of schools. While scholars of the field posit similar definitions of graphic novels, the characteristics of graphic novels receive differing emphasis dependent on the perspective of the scholar.

Both Schwartz (2002) and Carter (2007) emphasize the comic book as the foundational source for the graphic novel. Schwarz (2002) contends that graphic novels are "comics in book format" (p. 262). Building on Schwarz, Carter (2007) states that a graphic novel is a "book-length sequential art narrative featuring an anthology-style collection of comic art" (p.1). Similarly, Seelow (2010) describes the graphic novel as an "extended, self-contained comic book," but adds, "graphic novels are not just transitions to more advanced prose works … but that graphic novels, in themselves, are comparable to the best prose works" (p. 57).

The American Library Association (ALA; The National Coalition Against Censorship, the American Library Association & the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, 2006) characterizes the graphic novel as "a singular product of the 20th century" (p.2) that unfolds similarly to narrative as explored in film. Stressing the illustration as a primary feature of the graphic novel, the ALA sums up these definitions by suggesting that the graphic novel is a comic book in "grown up" format. Thought of in this way, the graphic novel takes on the primary features of comic books in that they both employ sequential art to further the narrative. However, unlike the comic book, the graphic novel is a complete and sophisticated story. As Hart, (2010) suggests, graphic novels contain "skillful plot construction, thoughtfully-drawn characters and conflicts, and richly-evocative language" (p. 3).

Drawing from this rich tradition of work, we suggest that the graphic novel is an important and contemporary format of literature. The graphic novel can be either fiction or non-fiction and always includes sequential art as a primary feature of presentation. Like traditional fiction, the graphic novel provides the reader a story that contains a complete narrative inclusive of plot, setting, characterization, resolution and a moral or lesson. Non-fiction graphic novels offer the reader informational, content specific knowledge presented in text and illustration. Engaging in format, the graphic novel positions text and art as equal partners in the literary experience. In tandem, text and illustration offer the reader multiple pathways into the written presentation.

Reading and Literacy

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In the United States, three foundational definitions of reading have informed literacy instruction (Foertsch, 1998). The first addresses the mechanics of reading. Included within this definition is the basic ability to correctly decode and pronounce given words. In order to become proficient with this aspect of reading, teachers incorporate phonemic awareness, phonics, word structure and word building activities into their instruction.

Reading may also be defined as identifying words to access appropriate meaning. Here, students continue to learn about words, such as the rules of the written word, how to break up words into parts, and to identify root words. Each of these skills enables students to discover word meanings while they also consider the context of the passage. A third definition suggests that reading requires the reader to go beyond pronunciation, word identification, and simple context clues in order to bring meaning and a greater sense of understanding to the text.

Currently, a more comprehensive view of reading has been advanced that includes the three basic definitions, but also emphasizes reading and writing as a process situated within the context of authentic reading and writing experiences. Involving the higher order cognitive processes such as reasoning, comparing/contrasting, evaluating, and synthesizing the comprehensive definition of reading stresses the ways in which the reader engages with the text. This expanded definition also acknowledges the importance of strategic instructional approaches for the effective teaching of literacy processes (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; International Reading Association & National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

The understanding of literacy acquisition and progress continues to evolve with the emergence of rapidly changing technologies and new literacies (Kist, 2005; Leu & Kinzer, 2000; O'Connor, 2010). New literacies are highly visual in nature and make good use of illustrations, charts, graphs, and photographs. In our visually-rich society, using such texts can advantage all readers, especially those who struggle. Specifically, graphic novels offer "value, variety, and a new medium for literacy that acknowledges the impact of visuals" (Schwarz, 2002, p. 262). Graphic novels allow readers to negotiate their understanding of printed materials weaving information and data gleaned from multiple world-views and vantage points as they toggle between interpretations of text and illustration (Myers, 1996). Enticing and motivating for struggling readers, graphic novels can enhance the development of the critical literacy skills that schools and the 21st century workplace necessitate.

The Importance of Fluency Instruction

There are established ways to provide high quality literacy instruction in the language arts classroom. Most recently, the work of the National Reading Panel (2000) resulted in the recognition of five instructional components required for success in reading: Phonemic awareness, phonics (decoding), fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The identification of fluency was considered by many to be the most surprising since it was referred to as the "neglected reading goal" (Allington, 1983, p. 556) of the curriculum for decades. Fluency was not considered to be integral to the reading curriculum because it was not a skill needed by most adult readers who are likely to favor silent reading. As such, reading fluency was overlooked in

the reading curriculum and did not receive explicit attention in the classroom (Zimmerman, Rasinski, & Foreman, 2011).

Rasinki and Padak (2005) suggest that fluency may be defined in two distinct ways. On one hand, fluency is viewed as the ability to decode words automatically so that students are able to focus on text meaning. Alternatively, fluency is marked by the ability to parse the written word into meaningful chunks, resulting in expressive, prosodic reading that intentionally makes use of pauses, word emphasis, smoothness, intonation, and volume. Regardless of the perspective, in both cases fluency is understood as a precondition for comprehension and increased reading competence (Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Rasinski, 2010; Topping, 2006).

Moreover, the reader must be able to decode and comprehend simultaneously in order to engender meaningful, expressive reading. If too much cognitive energy is placed on sounding out words, the student has limited mental energy left for comprehension, the premier goal of reading (Rasinski & Padak, 2008). When students are unable to effortlessly decode while reading, comprehension suffers setting into motion a downward spiral for these students as they fall further behind their peers in academic achievement (Stanovich, 1986).

This gap becomes even more pronounced as students transition from primary to middle and upper grades. At these grade levels, the time spent and the quantity of reading tends to decline, resulting in diminished literacy skills as well as motivation to read. This is a critical time in the educational lives of "tweens" and adolescents. At this stage, they are confronted with increasingly diverse and complex texts and cannot afford to be deficient in the literacy skills necessary to navigate the reading and writing requirements of school and far beyond graduation.

Our focus on adolescents is not accidental. As NAEP (2009) results suggest, reading proficiency drops from grade four through grade ten with nearly 70 percent of middle and high school students scoring below the proficient level in reading achievement. When student scores at the basic level are included in the sample, the results are even more distressing. Twenty-five percent of eighth-grade students and 27 percent of twelfth grade students score below the basic level of reading achievement, suggesting that they do not have even "partial mastery of appropriate grade-level knowledge and skills" (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010, pg.1). As the cognitive demands of the workplace increase, literacy is fast becoming a nonnegotiable skill for today's youth.

The Fluency Development Lesson

The Fluency Development Lesson (FDL), an instructional reading routine, was originally developed as an intervention to support the regular reading program (Rasinski, Padak, Linek, & Sturtevant, 1994). The primary purpose was to increase the progress of students who find learning to read difficult. Although the FDL was initially designed as an instructional model for struggling primary-aged children, the FDL has been successfully implemented with elementary and middle/secondary school students as well as with English language learners (Zimmerman, Rasinski, & Foreman, 2011). In the FDL, several specific components of research-based fluency instruction work together in a manner that accelerates students' reading progress in a relatively

condensed time frame (Rasinski, 2010). Within the focused FDL routine, students have multiple opportunities to engage in authentic reading, thereby honing their fluency, comprehension, and word recognition skills (Padak & Rasinski, 2008). Practice is crucial to the development of reading progress and proficiencies. The importance of the increased time spent on reading provided by the FDL cannot be overstated. When implemented with fidelity to the lesson structure on a regular basis, the FDL holds much potential for substantial improvements in reading since such progress is significantly related to increased time on task (Gallagher, 2003).

The approach requires that students and teachers work for 10 to 15 minutes each day with a carefully selected text in which the teacher, or a more capable peer, models reading the text for the students. The teacher then gradually hands over the responsibility for the reading task to the students. Through a series of repeated readings, word study, and attention to comprehension, students master reading the passage beyond the surface level to achieve in depth understanding.

Graphic novels come in a variety of formats. While not all graphic novel formats lend themselves to oral reading, many do. Examples of these include the *Bizenghast* series (LeGrow, 2005), the *Vampire Kisses* series (Schreiber, 2007), and the 2008 Caldecott Medal winner, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (Selznick, 2007). In these books, full-page text is present and could be adapted to the FDL. In other cases, where the text is less dense and more fluid, the graphic novel might be used as an engaging, interactive reading practice. The combination of shorter passages paired with graphics provides the reader strong clues to content and meaning. In this way, use of the graphic novel enhances student reading comprehension that in turn, enhances student learning. As Myers (1996, p.42) notes, graphic novels incorporate many of the conventions that appear in the "drawing and social notes of [students] where they interact with oral language, songs, actions and gestures" to produce a text rich in the resources of popular culture. While no study has yet paired graphic novels and the FDL, other work (Horn & Giacobbe, 2007) suggests that such a pairing holds great promise.

Fluency matters regardless of whether the reading is in oral or silent form. As students gain control over the processes of decoding and word identification and are successfully reading at basic levels silent reading emerges, requiring students to employ in-the-head thinking processes to acquire the meaning in texts (Clay, 2005). According to Topping (2006), the "extraction of maximum meaning at maximum speed in a relatively continuous flow" is the main purpose of silent reading (p. 173) so that the reader can attend to the larger meaning behind the text. Students need to develop solid silent reading abilities to succeed in school, perform well on tests, and to function in the world beyond the classroom. Given the importance of competent silent reading, it is surprising that schools often emphasize silent reading fluency the least, although it is expected and tested the most (Gregg, 2010).

As we describe the FDL and its use with graphic novels, we will illustrate how the silent and oral reading of graphic novels complement each other and can result in more powerful practices for student learning as related to fluency and comprehension. We will also weave into our discussion how using more traditional texts for the initial phases of the FDL can then be adapted by students into graphic novel formats increasing comprehension, motivation and engagement in their work.

Overview of the Fluency Development Lesson

The following provides a brief overview of the essential features of the FDL (Adapted from Zimmerman & O'Connor, 2011):

1. *Modeling*. A first expressive reading is presented by a fluent reader. This may be the teacher or it might be another student who has demonstrated strong fluency skills. The role of the students is to listen and enjoy the performance.

2. *Text shared with students*. The teacher (or other fluent reading model) presents copies of the selected text to the students. The students are now able to follow along as the teacher or model reader presents another oral reading performance of the selected text. The qualities of the oral reading are discussed by both the teacher and the students.

3. *Repeated Readings*. The students and teacher work together for several more expressive readings of the passage. With each attempt, the teacher and the students become aware of student improvement in reading rate, decoding and word recognition. Comprehension is also enhanced as rereading is a key strategy for both improving text recall and understanding (Rasinski, 2010). Throughout the repeated readings, the student is encouraged to underline or circle parts of the passage that interest or challenge them.

4. *Comprehension and vocabulary*. At this juncture in the FDL, attention shifts from various forms of choral and paired repeated readings to determining what the passage offers the reader. Discussion focuses on developing meaning and comprehension of the material as well as identifying unknown vocabulary words.

5. *Paired practice*. Once the meaning of the passage is clear and key vocabulary is defined, it is time for the students to read the passage in pairs without teacher support. This choral reading reinforces fluency in that it allows students to practice reading in a fluid, confident way.

6. *Alternating reading*. Students should then practice the passage by alternating the reading with their partner paying close attention to expression, word accuracy and fluency. At this time, students may continue their discussion of the content of the passage, broadening their comprehension by working with the ideas contained within the text as they focus on proper use of the vocabulary in the passage in their own conversation.

7. *Rehearsal.* Individually or with partners the students practice and prepare for performance of the text or passage. The practice involves both oral and silent reading as a way to gain lasting fluency skills.

8. *Performance.* The students individually or in partners perform the text for an audience. Positive feedback should then be provided to the performing students. Positive feedback can be provided in any number of ways including verbal praise,

short written comments by teachers and peers, and/or applause, or more formal discussions of what went well in the reading.

In practice, incorporating graphic novels into FDL might unfold as follows:

Preparation

Preparation for the FDL is not a labor intensive process. The first step involves the teacher or student carefully selecting the designated fluency text. Texts written with a sense of voice are ideal texts to be selected for use in the FDL because they are meant to be performed or become more powerful when read aloud (Rasinski, 2006). The graphic novel also enhances the presentation by pairing the spoken words with engaging and provocative visuals. The addition of visual panels along-side well-read text can result in more complex student performances. In turn, this complexity informs comprehension efforts as students focus on the written words and the panels together to derive meaning from the text.

The Daily Lesson (Adapted from Zimmerman, Rasinski, & Foreman, 2011, pp. 375-377)

Monday: Launch the lesson and read to students.

1. After the text is carefully selected, the teacher reads, modeling fluent, phrased, prosodic reading. During this time, the students are to simply listen and enjoy as the teacher reads the text. Using a full page of text is one way to launch the lesson and arouse students' curiosity about the book, and ultimately motivate them to read the story in its entirety. Passages that include matters of intrigue or mystery, dialogue, humor, and rich vocabulary make ideal texts to launch the lesson. We offer the following excerpt from the beginning of a chapter from the graphic novel *Bizenghast* (LeGrow, 2005, p. 36) a graphic novel that contains themes and content of interest to middle grade students to demonstrate the types of graphic novels that are well suited to this practice.

"Second Graveyard" Theory Still Disputed

Recent investigation into the town records of Bizenghast (a small mill city outside of Watertown) has left historians stymied, as a large number of death certificates officiated in the town between 1701 and 1950 do not match up to any of the plots in the residential graveyard.

This apparent lack of bodies to match the certificates was for a long time the only concern of local genealogists. Recently however … visitors from the suburbs have begun to take long hiking trips through the woods of Bizenghast on a quest to find out what has now become known as Bizenghast's Graveyard, an alleged second cemetery that historians claim must exist, in order to contain the missing bodies. To add to the confusion, many visitors to the antiquated town claim to have found the graveyard in the woods, only to mysteriously lose it again.

"My husband and I were out hiking in the woods when we found this enormous place, right in the middle of a field," Maryann King told the Daily Eagle. "It was like a huge graveyard with really big towers that looked kind of like horses or something. We had no idea anyone was looking for it until we got back to town and asked the manager of the inn about it. We came back later with [sister] Joyce and [brother-in-law] Robert, but we couldn't find it again. We went right to the spot where it was in, but it wasn't there. And all the pictures I took came out overexposed."

"I don't want them anyhow," added King, "That place gives me the creeps."

Similar stories have appeared on the Internet, so many that the town of Bizenghast has promised to issue an official statement on its website, advising visitors not to enter the woods without a guide, as sudden cliffs and drop-offs near the coastline represent a risk of injury to inexperienced hikers. Unfortunately for the town, its remote location and unexplained electrical storms have taken the town's official website offline for months.

2. The teacher discusses the probable meanings of the text with the class as the quality of his or reading.

3. The teacher displays the text on the visual presenter or the SMART board.
   The teacher reads the passage again to the students who are directed to follow along silently. Again, the students are asked to relax and enjoy.

4. The entire group is invited to join in and read the text chorally several times. The teacher may create variety in the choral reading by having students read the passage or portions of it in groups.

Tuesday: Repeated reading

1. The class reads and rereads the passage again chorally. Again, variations on choral reading may be requested by the teacher.

2. Comprehension and vocabulary are emphasized at this point of the FDL. The teacher may ask questions that have students identify points of intrigue, mystery and make predictions about what will happen next in the story. Additionally, interesting and/or challenging words are highlighted on the students' texts and discussed to ensure understanding.

3. At this point, the students are encouraged to engage in wide reading (Kuhn and Stahl, 2003). Here, they begin to silently read the novel and strive to eventually read the novel in its entirety.

Wednesday: Repeated reading, comprehension and vocabulary

1. The students again read the text chorally.

2. The students read in partners, alternating the text reading.

3. Together, the students read ahead in the graphic novel to discount or affirm predictions and to further address the meaning and vocabulary of the story. From the Bizehghast passage, the teacher may suggest that the students work together to use background knowledge and context clues to identify word meanings.

Thursday: Silent reading and creating graphics

1. Silent reading of the selected passage begins the lesson.

2. Next, the students work individually or in pairs to identify the main idea of the passage and create a graphic novel panel that illustrates this point. Teachers encourage the use of pictures, symbols, speech bubbles, and captions to summarize the main idea of the text. Engagement with this creative process increases fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary as the selected passage must be revisited several times to compose the panel that accurately captures the essence of the piece.

3. The students share their panels and understanding with others in the classroom.

Friday: Performance

1. The teacher asks for volunteers to perform the text. The students often use a reader's theater type of format to present the passage to the class. The performers receive positive and constructive feedback from the teacher and peers. The provision of feedback concerning fluency (e.g., how well the passage was read), comprehension (e.g., how well the student was able to explain the passage) and analysis (e.g., how a student might compare this passage and visual panels to other types of material) reinforces the hard work in which students have engaged as well as their final presentation and understanding(s.)

Implications for Classroom Teachers

The adoption of graphic novels as authentic and legitimate forms of text in a fluency development lesson can be motivating for struggling and reluctant readers (Hughes, King, Perkins & Fuke, 2011). Certainly, the inclusion of illustrative images makes the books appear, on the surface, to be an easier read than text dense volumes. However, we argue that just like one should not judge a book by its cover, the graphic novel should not be judged by its predominate use of images.

Image, within the graphic novel, transcends the typical picture that accompanies traditional text. Each panel contributes to the story, challenging the reader to make cognitive

sense of the story as it unfolds. As Lavin (1998) and Lyga (2006) assert, engaging with graphic novels is a more rigorous cognitive activity than reading conventional text-only books. Since the images are part of the text and contribute to comprehension of the material, reading the images requires the student to make sense of the visual cues within the content of the written text (Monnin, 2010). In this way, the FDL employs visual metaphors that are embedded within the graphic frame and students are challenged to make sense of the story line using these context clues. By teaching and encouraging visual literacy in concert with the FDL, teachers who pair text with images expand the ways in which students can access content knowledge and understanding.

We cannot draw this distinction sharply enough. Recently, scholars (Schmoker, 2011) have taken aim at the use of 'art projects' as a poor substitute for offering students challenging academic work in the literacy classroom. We argue that unlike the shoebox diorama, coat hanger mobile or sugar cube fortress; teaching students to read and produce complex images that forward, rather than simply accompany, understanding of text(s), cognitively engages students in synthetic and evaluative learning.

Use of the FDL in tandem with visual literacy pedagogies demands that the reader engage actively with the text beyond basic comprehension. It challenges the reader to take in a variety of stimuli as part of the sense-making process. In turn, the FDL requires the reader to enter into a dialogue with the text itself, questioning, predicting, creating and reflecting as meaning is developed. In one sense, thinking of literacy in this way, places the reader first. Unlike more conventional approaches, that ask the reader to make sense of an author's purpose or perspective, visual literacy as supported by use of graphic novels, suggests that the reader's experience of the text be legitimized and explored.

By brokering a different dynamic between text and reader, literacy becomes less a search to understand the other and more a pursuit to understand the self in context with the other. Students who may have never experienced reading as an authentic extension of their world may well be able to do so as their experiences become part of a shared narrative concerning the text. The increased fluency that results from utilizing the FDL fosters an opportunity for the reader to smoothly shift between visual images and printed text within the graphic novel. As a result of increased fluency, students gain higher-level understanding(s) from shared literary experiences.

Furthermore, the graphic novel can provide scaffolding to conventional novels (Carter, 2007; Hart, 2010; Hughes, King, Perkins & Fuke, 2011). A note of caution here: We do not want to undermine the potential of graphic novels to serve this important bridging function for struggling or reluctant readers. However, we do want to suggest that graphic novels can be a primary genre of literature within the classroom. When viewed within the context of visual literacy, educators can begin to understand the ways in which these texts and their unique format can contribute to fluency and comprehension.

Conclusion

In this paper we have argued for two important ideas. The first suggests that fluency matters. The second suggests that graphic novels are an important to enhance visual literary. Taken together, we emphasize that the use of graphic novels as a tool to inform fluency instruction can provide middle school teachers a powerful educational tool. While we have focused the instructional intervention themes of this paper on using graphic novels to reach and teach struggling readers, the FDL intervention has the potential to reach readers of all levels. We hope that these understandings alone offer much to the discussion.

However, more importantly, is our call to action. Teachers can assist readers, especially those who struggle, by thinking of reading instruction more inclusively. By employing forms of text like the graphic novel, engagement in the literacy classroom can be increased. Furthermore, by engaging with the graphic novel as a pathway into visual literacy, teachers can advance comprehension in important contemporary contexts.

In turn, as comprehension grows, so does the reader's ability to critically examine text. When students become critically and intellectually engaged with text, they can also begin to understand the importance of literacy and the ways in which engagement with text can both expand and inform their world. By using the graphic novel as a way into the development of fluency, teachers can place the reader first, thus creating a student-centered context for learning.

As we reach the end of this piece, we would like to argue that this learning context is a unique mix of the social and the personal. It is social in that oral fluency, as emphasized in the FDL, demands the performance of the written word in the social space of the classroom. Furthermore, fluency, when paired with visual literacy, depends on the development of shared meanings of the studied text. As discussion is informed by the voices of students, the knowledge that is generated is unavoidably co-created in shared space. It is personal because the individual's voice, whether part of discussion or part of performance is required. Engagement with not only the graphic novel material, but with the process of meaning making requires that students show up and be present in their own learning experience. This is a powerful mix of interaction, one which, we argue, fundamentally changes the classroom space.
The classroom space is changed for two reasons, we assert.

When new tools, such as graphic novels are introduced (and legitimized) new content becomes part of the vocabulary of the classroom and the grammar of schooling. As visual images and printed words become equally probed for meaning and what text means is investigated in the context of multiple voices and experience, the learning plane can be leveled. Subtle shifts in the ways students speak and the ways students interact can create compelling outcomes for learning. Second, new tools inevitably create a new context for learning. The context we envision is one in which connecting with and collaborating about text is fostered. The result can be a classroom where students are more engaged in their learning and more compelled by the understandings they create.

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Reinventing the Composition Classroom, or How Making Comics Can Clarify the Composing Process

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Reinventing the Composition Classroom, or How *Making Comics* Can Clarify the Composing Process

By Jeraldine Kraver, University of Northern Colorado

It is impossible, it seems, to open a newspaper or drive past a multiplex and not recognize the influence on contemporary culture of comics or their expanded cousin, the graphic novel. The two modes are all but redefining what and how we read and see. And, at times, they are even redefining how we teach. Or they should. After all, many students know comics the way we would like them to know more "traditional" literature. They can detail the back-story to every Marvel Comics superhero. They understand the chemistry of kryptonite in all its many colors, the dark [k]night of the soul that burdens Batman, and the Teutonic paganism of Thor. They inhabit the fictional world of El-Hazard in the same way that their teachers, as adolescents, walked the streets of Victorian London with David Copperfield or traveled the road to Canterbury with the unforgettable Wife of Bath. However, ask students in the writing classroom about their comics reading, and they become uncharacteristically sheepish. The reason is not hard to discern. Stephan Cary, in his introduction to *Going Graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom* (2004), recalls, "Comic book reading was one of the great school taboos, along with smoking, fighting, and swearing [. . .]" (2). This anti-comics bias, though, is waning.

Increasingly, educators are acknowledging the influence of comics and graphic novels on the culture of students at all grade and ability levels. For instance, one could argue that Art Spiegelman's *Maus* has been embraced as part of the secondary English Language Arts (ELA) canon, and works like Marjane Satrapi's award-winning *Persepolis* and Keiji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* are surfacing in history and social studies classrooms. Education journals and web sites tout the "educational potential of comics and graphic novels," noting their ability to "help with building complex reading skills."[1] The IRA's *Read-Write-Think* site includes lessons on using *Persepolis* as part of a WebQuest on Iran while *The Reading Teacher* explores using comics to "deepen students understanding of content using visual literacy skills" (McVicker 85). The pages of *English Journal* have featured essays addressing how to use graphic novels in urban schools or to introduce multiple literacies in secondary classrooms (Frey and Fisher, 2004 and Schwarz, 2006).

In addition, Cary's *Going Graphic* provides dozens of lesson ideas for putting comics to work in the multilingual classroom while James Bucky Carter's *Building Literacy Connections with Graphic Novels: Page by Page, Panel by Panel* (2007) collects essays by teachers who pair "traditional" texts with graphic counterparts (e.g., Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* with Katherine Arnoldi's *The Amazing "True" Story of a Teenage Single Mom* or Dickens' *Oliver Twist* with Will Eisner's *Fagin the Jew*). This very journal, *SANE*, is only further evidence for the presence of graphic novels in the classroom canon. For all this interest, though, the effect is somewhat piecemeal, educators having not yet fully recognized the potential impact of the mode on teaching and learning--*impact*, in the way of meteors hurtling towards earth and diverted

miraculously by Superman. The word suggests a violent collision, a forceful coincidence, a profound and altering effect perfectly congenial to the comics genre.

The effects of capitalizing on comics in the classroom are multiple. Literacy experts have come to acknowledge what comics readers and creators have understood all along: that the literacy skills required to read comics and graphic novels are often as sophisticated as those employed in reading traditional school-based texts. Thus, textbooks that incorporate excerpts from graphic novels (as opposed to the occasional cartoon panel for visual interest or rhetorical study) appear in the catalogs of every major academic publisher.[2] This new affinity for incorporating students' out-of-school literacy practices is a central trend in literary learning. Indeed, comics are but one of the multiple modes identified for classroom use and explored by educators such as Cynthia and Richard Selfe, Gail Hawisher, Suzanne M. Miller, and Sara Kadjer.

One of the earliest, most compelling, and allied approaches to students' out-of-school literacies is James Paul Gee's *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Literacy and Learning* (2003). Gee, assessing the literacies used playing video games, contends that we must expand the conception of literacy beyond reading and writing to include the kind of visual literacy that prepares students to "read" the "images, symbols, graphs, diagrams, [and] artifacts [. . .]" populating modern mass communication (13). As he immersed himself in video games, Gee realized that, in "multimodal" texts, words and images can communicate different things, and "the combination of the two modes communicates things neither of the modes does separately" (14). Recognizing that new literacies require new skill sets, Gee looks to change the way we think about and teach what he calls "semiotic domains," defined as "any set of practices that recruits one or more modalities (e.g., oral or written language, images, equations, symbols, sounds, gestures, graphs, artifacts, etc.) to communicate distinctive types of meanings" (18). When we move to this expanded notion of what it means to be literate, we think beyond mere reading and writing: individuals can be literate in the traditional modalities, they can be literate in the "new" modalities, or they can be literate in all or in part of any number of modalities.

In this discussion, I propose that fully appreciating the creative process behind the comics mode provides an engaging model for developing students' academic literacy, especially in the crucial area of composition. Gee concludes, "people are (or are not) literate (partially or fully) in a domain if they can recognize (the equivalent of 'reading') and/or produce (the equivalent of 'writing') meanings in the domain" (18). Just as Gee identifies video games as a semiotic domain, I find the same to be true with comics. And, just as Gee identifies principles of learning involved with "good" video games (in fact, he has 36 of them), I shall explore similar ideas. Critiqued from whatever perspective or in whatever terms, effective communication is effective communication. In Classical terms, the role and responsibilities of the "rhetor" are the same regardless of whether that rhetor is a composer of written or spoken words, hand-drawn or photographic images, notes on a piano, or paint on a canvas. Or, in more contemporary terms, the visual configuration of James Kinneavy's Rhetorical Triangle is equally applicable. At the same time, as one charged with training teachers of English Language Arts and composition and as a writing teacher myself, I recognize that, despite in-roads made by multimodality in secondary and post-secondary classrooms, we continue to teach (and test) students' abilities to

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communicate in the most traditional of genres: the essay. One need only look to the Common Core State Standards to confirm that, although there is attention paid to 21st-century skills, both teachers and students are assessed "monomodally." Consequently, when I use comics or other non-traditional modes in the classroom, it is with an emphasis not to composing comics but to composing in *any* mode, especially those that are most frequently encountered and required in the post-secondary classroom.

Part One: The Creative Process of the Comic Product

To understand the full potential of the comics mode, we need to understand how the mode itself involves what comics artist and theorist Scott McCloud calls "making" comics. Rather than scattershot approaches used to incorporate comics into discrete classroom lessons, we can look to a more systematic method, one that begins from the theories of making comics as a model for developing students' academic literacy. The resulting similarities and differences cast an illuminating light in two ways. First, comics theory reveals to students that comic artists do, in fact, work very, very hard at the process of creating the comics that their readers devour whole. What seems like playful diversion requires a great deal of artfulness. In the same way, students find that they must consider multiple questions and work through multiple processes (and drafts) in their school-based writing. As students come to understand the parallel between the processes of comics and their own writing, their engagement in both directions matures, and they become both more analytical (as well as selective) in their reading. Second, comics theory reveals the kinds of complex skills underlying *any* literacy practice: skills in decoding, inferencing, and recognizing conceptual relationships as well as attending to syntax, semantics, and word properties. Once students identify in themselves the repertoire of skills required to engage with the X-Men or *Sin City* or *The System*, teachers can exploit such out-of-school literacy practices in a variety of school-based learning tasks.

Beyond convincing our students about how form underlies function or tapping transferable literacy skills, we as teachers must embrace a rare moment in the classroom: students are, typically, the "experts," their range of comics reference far beyond the background of most teachers. Sharing classroom space and taking seriously students' non-school-based literacy practices creates a classroom where the learners have a voice in text selection and assignment design. The result is an increase in both their self-efficacy and motivation, two principles crucial to successful literacy-learning.[3] Let me make clear: valuing and incorporating adolescents' extracurricular literacy practices does not eliminate the need for preparing students to understand how literacy operates within academic disciplines or workplace settings, nor does self-selection of texts eliminate the need to develop skills required to read and comprehend school-based or work-related texts. Rather, incorporating comics into literacy instruction confirms to students that, in asking them to read school-based texts, we are drawing on the same skills they practice when reading comics or graphic novels. In this way, we intrigue them, we motivate them, and we validate their out-of-school literacy practices. Ultimately, the point is that, when we challenge students to apply the skills they have honed in one "semiotic domain" to another, we provide an opportunity for them to succeed.

Part Two: Composing Comic and the Composition Process

During the last decade or so, a wide variety of artists, historians, cultural critics, and pedagogues has propelled comics and graphic novels into the aerie space of texts associated with canonical prose, poetry, drama, and film. The resulting discussions have employed the language of literary and rhetorical theory, and the comics and graphic novels are often included in the core of curricular "heavy hitters" (a status that does not necessarily please all comics artists). Probably the most famous among comics theorists are Eisner, who began his work in the 1940s, and McCloud. Eisner, one may say, started the discussion of comics composition with two texts based on his courses at New York's School for Visual Arts--*Comics and Sequential Art* (1985) and *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* (1996)--and McCloud, the acknowledged "theorist of comics," codified it. McCloud's first study, *Understanding Comics* (1993), explores the history of the mode, offering basic definitions and critical vocabulary. His follow-up, *Reinventing Comics: How Imagination and Technology are Revolutionizing an Art Form* (2000), examines the growth, success, and potential of comics as a mode and an industry. However, it is McCloud's *Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels* (2006) that has quickly emerged as the formative text for comics theory. As with all his books, McCloud shows and tells by presenting his discussion about comics *as* comics. With the "cartoon" McCloud as teacher and guide, the book tackles in detail the mechanisms behind creating comics, offering an accessible and alluring connection to the invention processes at work in school-based writing. Chapter One, in particular, will be important to the following discussion.

Before even beginning to connect making comics with "making" an academic essay, I try to convince students that *all* writing is at some level a matter of storytelling--that even the most "dry" academic argument narrates a sequence of data into what often is called "intellectual drama." And, we agree that two familiar modes--although not the only modes--for telling stories are words and images. To make this point and prepare students for our work with comics, I select a passage from a traditional history textbook that may be coupled with one of Larry Gornick's cartoon histories or the graphic version of Howard Zinn's classic *A People's History of the United States*. As a class, we take these excerpts side-by-side in exploring how the historical moment unfolds in the narratives--that is, how the data, be they words or images or both, are sequenced in order to convey an idea. Here is the moment when we move to Eisner's notion of comics as sequential art, and I introduce students to selections from *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*. Eisner's definition, "A story is the narration of a sequence of events deliberately arranged for telling [. . .] kind of like reporting an event" (9), resonates with what the students have heard about writing throughout their academic lives. They recognize that, although both images and words are available for meaning-making, the combination of the two modes can transcend either. Our next activity divides the class, and half the students write a prose narrative of the graphic version in the style of a traditional history textbook while the other half renders the history textbook in a comics form. These activities demonstrate that comics are as viable for meaning-making as writing. Although I caution students that most teachers do not permit such multimodality, the point, again, is that that I get students thinking about the core skills to any composition process.

Part Three: Artfulness and the Art of Composition

Given the overlaps of conventions and expectations between comics and conventional school writing, I next turn to how an artist's or writer's goals are achieved through particular choices such as examples that develop their topics, words used to express those examples, and the presentation of the whole. Subsumed in these compositional choices are issues of format, style, and tone. Thus, although our class is built on comics and our textbook is about comics theory, we do not neglect topics familiar to the more traditional composition classroom. Classical rhetoric gets due treatment when we review in our context the canons of rhetoric, especially *invention*, *disposition*, and *style*. Kinneavy's Rhetorical Triangle and Stephen Toulmin's Model of Argumentation follow, especially in terms of audience, voice, and organization. However, it is McCloud's *Making Comics* that best allows the writing teacher neatly to bridge the crafts of comics and composition.

In the first chapter of *Making Comics* ("Writing with Pictures"), McCloud asserts that making comics requires a "constant stream of **CHOICES**."[4] He then distributes such choices into "**FIVE BASIC TYPES**" (9) that inform the creation of any comic: *moment*, *frame*, *image*, *word*, and *flow*. These choices, he explains, are requisite for communicating through comics with clarity, and clarity, he continues, "means making comprehension your ultimate goal" (37). As McCloud walks us through these choices, the alignment with the choices made during academic writing emerges for students. Yet, rather than simply explaining to students this connection, I, as the flesh-and-blood teacher to the pen-and-ink McCloud, gently prod them to discover how comics and writing overlap.[5] It is when I subsequently ask students to write about what they have learned that the alignment reveals itself, and the discussion of the writing process takes an exciting turn.

CHOICE ONE: Every Story Has a Thesis; Every Essay has a "Moment"

Starting with the choices that McCloud sees as crucial to the "ultimate goal" (37) of comprehension, "moment" refers to the event the artist wants to depict, the story being told. In thinking about moment, artists must decide what to include and what to leave out in order to tell the story with "clarity" and in a "compelling" manner (10). To illustrate, McCloud offers a comic strip of eight panels that develops a straightforward story about a man who finds a key.

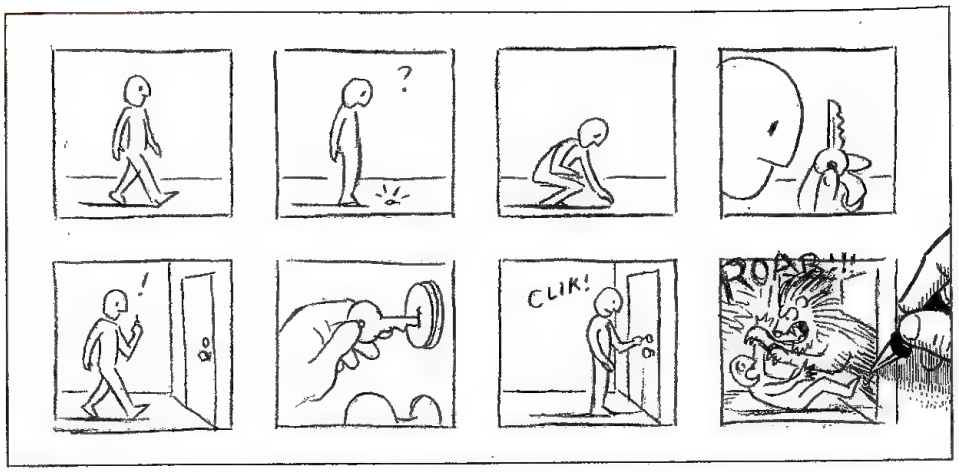

Fig. 1. McCloud's eight-panel man-with-a-key strip (12).

The sequence shows the following panels: (1) a man walking, (2) the man looking down, (3) the man bending to retrieve something, (4) the man looking closely at the key he has picked up, (5) the man coming to a door, (6) the man inserting the key, (7) a click as the door unlocks, and (8) a lion jumping out. The "artwork" relies on stark lines, and the man is little more than a stick figure. Nonetheless, the story is obvious. The only words are "click" in Panel Seven to indicate that the door unlocks and "ROAR," in the final panel, when the lion emerges. There is also a question mark above the man's head in Panel Two, when he looks to the ground and sees some object, and an exclamation point when he encounters an apparently locked door in Panel Five. The strip is simple, yet, even given that quality, the eight panels offer a narrative that provokes much discussion in the classroom.

In his comic strip, McCloud takes events and puts them in sequence--that is, he breaks the moment into what he calls "chunks," each of which gets a panel. Each panel becomes a moment in itself, and each advances the story: remove one panel, and the story falls apart. McCloud explains, "The moments chosen [. . .] represent the most direct, efficient route to communicating our simple plot" (12). Here, in breaking down the story into "readable chunks" as part of the comic's "planning stage" (11), is the heart of Classical *invention*. When the comics process is aligned with composition,[6] moment becomes the writer's purpose, the point of the essay that emerges as a clearly stated thesis or controlling idea. To illustrate the rhetorical importance to these moments, I have my students read (and write) traditional prose essays that supplement our work with comics, and we use these essays to compare such traditional writing genres with the graphic narrative.[7] The comparison, I have found, helps students recognize that a comic or graphic novel requires readers – not artists – to construe a thesis from the words and the pictures. The task of distinguishing "moment" in these two modes reinforces for students once again the kind of complex reading skills required of comics.

In thinking further about a composition's moment, we align the panels of McCloud's "man with a key" comic to the paragraphs in an essay. In other words, in the same way panels are used to develop the comic's moment, paragraphs develop the essay's thesis, each furthering

the controlling idea and each needing to be, as McCloud instructs, clear, compelling, and efficient.[8] In order to emphasize this connection, I have students engage in a variety of tasks that builds on McCloud's surprisingly complex comic. First, they craft captions for each frame. Then, they replace each panel with words – that is, they craft the story of the man with the key in prose without the benefit of any images. Next, they write a "thesis" for the strip of panels, one that usually takes the form of a warning about opening unknown doors or picking up items from the street. This thesis serves as the title for their prose panels. This translation illustrates for students just how McCloud's moment drives all the elements in his comic strip.

Once they have completed this task, students parse a traditional "comp class" essay into its moments by using a template of panels. This activity reveals to students how the prose paragraphs, distributed as a series of panels, develop the writer's thesis in the same way McCloud's panels developed his moment. (The computer makes this task efficient for their cutting and pasting the essay's word-moments into the template.) The title of this set of prose panels is a version of what they identify as the essay's thesis. Positioned above the panels, the title/thesis serves are the essay's central moment. Thus, in a visceral way that they have never experienced when confronted with the rather abstract term *thesis*, by thinking in pictures, students *get* it.

CHOICE TWO: "Framing" the Shot, um. . . *Story* . . . um, *Argument*

Once the comic artist selects a moment to illustrate, decisions about how to "frame" that moment ensue. As McCloud explains, framing involves choices about developing the story through individual panels, especially in terms of where to move in closely, and where to pull back. The resulting decisions are less about the details of the panel--that is, the objects or individuals we see in each--and more about angles, distance, and position. One may imagine the framing process with the familiar film director's gesture of creating a frame with one's hands (thumbs and index fingers in parallel L-shapes). Whereas aligning moment with thesis is fairly obvious, aligning framing with the composing process requires a bit more intellectual maneuvering. Students are inclined to see framing as filling up panels--that is, in crafting paragraphs. In response, I refer them to McCloud's description of chunks and have them complete an exercise from *Making Comics*, which involves a 16-panel grid. The first panel contains, simply enough, a standing figure. Student-artists then ask a friend (or "shoulder partner") what the character should do in the next panel. When drawing that next panel, the student-artist implements "viewing angle." McCloud explains, "If your character encounters an elephant, do you have to pull back? If he/she is clips a toenail, do you have to pull in?" (57). In addition to zoom levels, framing can involve tilting, rotating, or even changing elevation. The result, McCloud describes, is that framing shows "readers what they need to see" and creates a sense of "position and focus" (37). The implications for writing echo loudly.

In examining framing, we arrive at an inevitable and difficult question for all storytelling and argument: how much information is necessary to compel readers without lapsing into "plot summary"? Framing demands that writers position themselves in positioning their readers. In class, as we think about positioning the viewer--and, soon enough, the reader--we return to the Classical canon of *disposition*. And when it comes to disposing of ideas, the audience is paramount. No matter the mode, rhetors want their audience to understand and care enough

about their message simply to finish it. Surrounded as they are by vast entertainment and communication options, students immediately appreciate this seemingly simple challenge. Audience must come first.

Eisner reminds us of this central component to storytelling in his chapter "Images as Narrative Tools" from *Graphic Storytelling & Visual Narrative* when he explains the importance of stereotype: "Comic book art deals with recognizable reproductions of human conduct. Its drawings are a mirror reflection, and depend on the reader's stored memory of experience to visualize an idea or a process quickly" (17). In order to capitalize on this memory, the artist must be familiar with his audience and recognize that "each society has its own ingrown set of accepted stereotypes" (19). In other words, artists--or writers--must know and respond to their audiences. If they do not, their audiences will not be compelled. And then they will turn the channel. Or not finish the essay. Or close the comic book.

To gauge our audience when framing, we attend to the larger moves we make as writers. In an essay, framing is the art of ordering (or "positioning") the material that is most appropriate for the needs of the audience and the purpose established by the writer. I compare framing to outlining, and one of my students inevitably responds, "Oh, so this panel is a kind of Roman numeral one." This comparison casts new light on the formal outline's sequence of Roman numerals, Arabic numbers, and upper- and lower-case letters. Suddenly, outlining seems less an arbitrary exercise and more an integrated step in an essay's craft and purpose. Building on this revelation, we almost playfully caption our own set of panels with Classically framed terminology: "Dan offers his *exordium*"; "Poised for verbal battle, Dan asserts his *narratio*"; or, "In a daring parry, Dan launches into his *refutatio*." For a generation defined as visual learners, this approach is quite a bit of fun, and outlining becomes a step in the creative process as opposed to a chore.

Our consideration of framing alongside outlining slides easily to an association of panels to paragraphs, and the move is indeed a useful way to understand the rhetorical principle of development. However, students must recognize that one panel may be the equivalent of multiple paragraphs. Or, multiple panels may be combined into a single paragraph. To reinforce this process of distribution, I return to McCloud's notion of chunks and suggest that those chunks can be composed of one or more panels in a cartoon or paragraphs in an essay. So, as student writers move to drafting and discover which chunks will require further development, they insert additional paragraphs. McCloud well explains this point in using his eight-panel strip of the man with the key.

For instance, in Panel Three (the man bending to retrieve something), illustrating that the man bends *slowly* might require additional panels to indicate the speed of the man's motion. The effect could be interesting, but at issue is whether the extra panels are *necessary* to the story.[9] Does it matter how slowly or quickly the man bends? In this instance, it does not, so the slowly bending panels are superfluous. However, if it were to turn out that the man with the key cannot escape the lion because he has a wrenched back, then having him bend slowly would be integral to the narration, and those panels would need to be included. By thinking about framing (or development) in such broad strokes, writers identify both what needs further development and

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what needs no development at all. Either way, important to our teaching project is that students discern the tight relationship between expressive form and intellectual function.

CHOICE THREE: Adding Images to a Panel; Seeing the Points in a Paragraph

Before narrowing our focus to words, we pause on McCloud's discussion about how images are at the very core of all comics. (McCloud, like any good teacher of writing, organizes his "choices" from global to local concerns.) In thinking about images, artists attend to "creating pictures to fill those frames and bring the world of [their] stories to life VISUALLY" (26). Of course, student writers must rely on something other than pictures to develop their "stories," and, although the inclination is to align image with words, McCloud's separation of the two choices is advantageous for writing teachers. In comics, words are used to develop images, the two elements working together seamlessly. In writing, the content that fills our panels/paragraphs is the evidence (what Toulmin calls "data") used to support our claims. However, before writers attend to the words they will use to articulate their supporting data, they need to specify what that data will be. Image, then, aligns with evidence that will form the substance of argument through paragraphs. And, writers do well to adhere to McCloud's advice that images must "first and foremost [. . .] communicate QUICKLY, CLEARLY and COMPELLINGLY with the reader" (26). As students discover, answering McCloud's injunction is harder than it appears.

Close readings of panels help illustrate the artfulness required of images, and I have students choose a panel from whatever graphic text we are studying for a close reading. In creating images, I remind them (and iterate McCloud), randomness is not an option. To emphasize this point, I ask students not just to describe a panel's image but to analyze its moment and framing. For instance, in our study of *Maus*, more than one student has chosen the hanging of the Jews on Modrzejowska Street.

COHN HAD A DRY GOODS STORE. HE WAS KNOWN OVER ALL SOSNOWIEC. OFTEN HE GAVE ME CLOTH WITH NO COUPONS.
I TRADED ALSO WITH PFEFER, A FINE YOUNG MAN - A ZIONIST. HE WAS JUST MARRIED. HIS WIFE RAN SCREAMING IN THE STREET.

Figs. 2 and 3. From Spiegelman's *Maus I,* Chapter Four "The Noose Tightens" (83).

The image of the legs placed in the forefront against the almost indistinguishable Jews in the background is a compelling moment in Vladek's narrative. One student, Matt, explained in his analysis the implications:

> McCloud writes [in *Understanding Comics*] that the more "cartoony a face" the more general it is, so it can apply to all different people. The character becomes any of us or all of us. However, the use of animal faces in *Maus* can make it hard for the reader to connect to the characters because they don't look like us. We can see them as animals. Even if we get the allegorical intention, it is hard (for me at least) to fully enter into the narrative. But the image of the feet in this frame is universal. I have killed a lot of mice, so seeing them hanging in the previous panel didn't get to me. But the legs: I felt that. The legs look like my legs.[10]

Matt's response is exactly where I want students to go. In describing the framing of the panel, Matt furthered that "isolating them as the central image in the center of the panel and framing them for the reader as close-up takes ordinary shoes on ordinary feet and makes them extraordinary." This notion of "extraordinary ordinary-ness" was for Matt both the moment of panel and central to the larger moment of the entire graphic novel. A teacher's task is made easy at such times. Another student in the same class observed, in a discussion board reflection about Matt's analysis, that "seeing the whole hanging and then seeing just the feet made me think about how I use quotes [sic] in my papers. I have this huge block of something I think is important evidence like something I find in a book or article and I cite the whole thing. Sometimes, it's 8 or 9 lines long. When maybe there is just a line or two in it that has more punch and I should dump the rest of it." In response, I simply directed the discussion towards McCloud's additional advice that, in the crafting of images that portray moments, artists should "get ready to get SPECIFIC" (27). As my student has already explained to his peers, such advice is sound, too, for how writers use evidence to support claims. McCloud concludes his discussion of image with a panel that speaks to all rhetors, comic artists, and writers of academic essays alike: "Question number one: will readers GET THE MESSAGE?" Students who have had teachers jot in the margins of their papers "unclear," "fuzzy," or even "huh?" understand McCloud's question all too well.

CHOICE FOUR: "Words" That Make Pictures

McCloud begins his discussion of this fourth choice by asserting, "Words can be a POWERFUL ALLY in the struggle to communicate" (30). What is especially appealing to this assertion is not the obvious point about the power of words, for we recite to students that mantra semester after semester. Rather, what appeals is McCloud's explicit acknowledgement of the "struggle" inherent to all communication practices. Recognizing this shared struggle is, again, one of my (many) goals in using comics and graphic novels because students are under a number of misconceptions about the modes, one of which is that they somehow feel that comic artists simply sit down and draw. McCloud's assertion--his entire text, for that matter--is designed to counter the myth that composition can or even should be easy.

Words are so important to comic artists that McCloud devotes an entire chapter ("The Power of Words") of *Making Comics* to the subject. Part of that power is the ability to "evoke feelings, sensations, and abstract concepts" as well as "the warmth and nuance of the human voice" (128). Although the bulk of McCloud's chapter covers how words and pictures combine to create meaning or the technique of the word bubble, there is an interesting connection to composing when McCloud addresses a challenge familiar to all writers: duplicating the "rich,

immersive experiences" created through the use of sight and sound in film and television (146). In comics, McCloud explains, words provide readers an opportunity to "listen with their eyes," and comic artists can use lettering to create vocal aspects like volume, timbre, and emphasis (146). Our students, on the other hand, have only Times New Roman 12-point font on 8 1/2 x 11" sheets of white paper.

Words, obviously, have a big job, and that job ranges from the subtly connotative to the rigorously denotative. Compounding the problem is that students are often under the misconception that feelings, sensations, or warmth are somehow antithetical to the kind of writing they do for the composition classroom or in the formal assignments they encounter across the curriculum. McCloud's discussion reminds students that, although the role played by words in comics and graphic novels is vastly different from their primacy in the written essay, as writers they *do* have a voice, they *can* assume a tone, and they *must* create a persona through their composing choices. McCloud's notions prepare students to measure their words when they assert their ideas and engage their audience, and his discussion segues neatly to our overview of how the *logos* of words are pivotal to a writer's *ethos* when eliciting *pathos* from an intended audience.

Complementary to McCloud's emphasis on the overall effect of words is how Eisner, in *Graphic Storytelling & Visual Narrative*, theorizes about the "grammar" of the comic panel, in particular his discussion of symbols and their function as, in effect, modifiers. Eisner explains, "There are some objects which have instant significance in graphic storytelling," and comic artists employ these objects as "modifying adjectives or adverbs [. . .]."

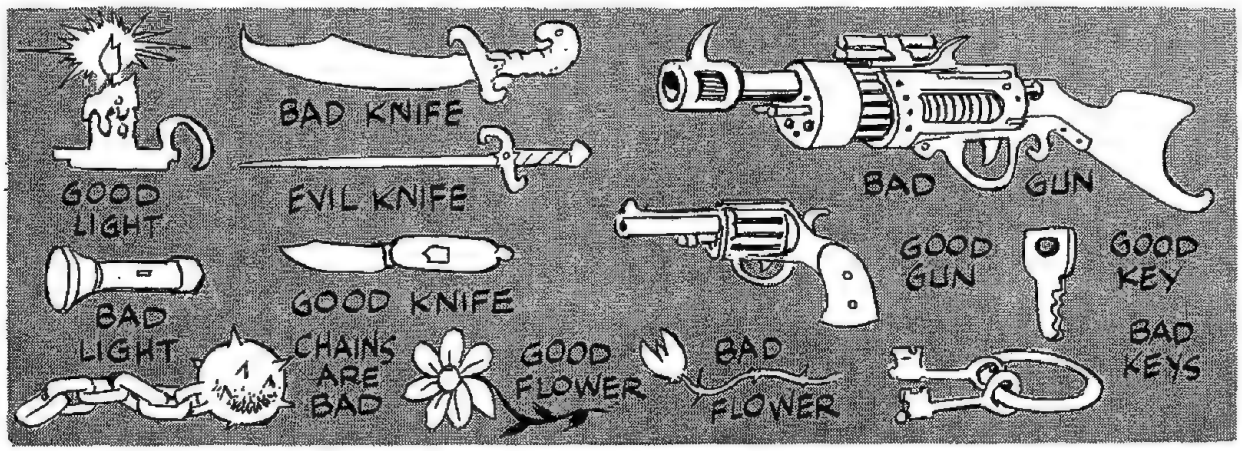

Fig. 4. Eisner's collection of "good" and "bad" objects (21).

As Eisner indicates, the nature of a weapon, here a gun or a knife, depends on how it is rendered by the artist. A six-shooter carried by a sheriff suggests a good gun used to serve the community against horse thieves and train robbers. An AK47, on the other hand, might suggest a "freedom fighter" or a terrorist far less interested in protecting and serving. A pocket knife is handy and

helpful at the campsite while a switchblade is never for the good. As well, Eisner depicts that how an item is presented "in action" functions as a kind of adverb:

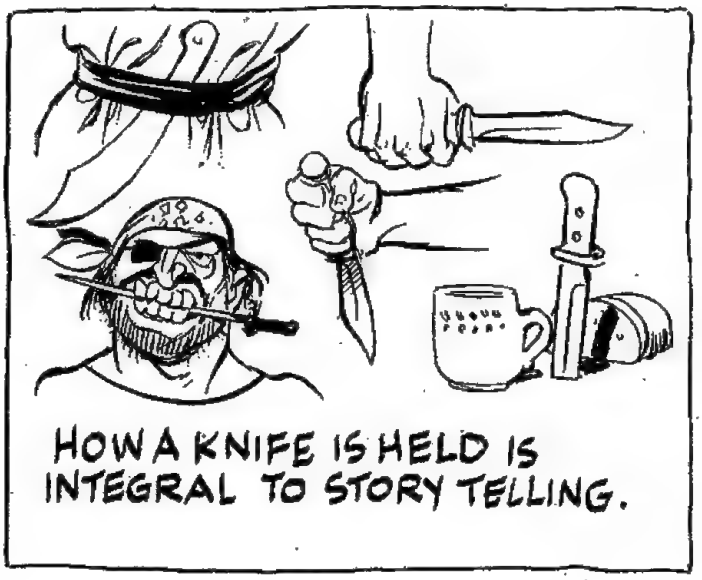

Fig. 5. Eisner's illustrations of objects in action (21).

Thus, a breadknife clutched in a raised fist suggests a weapon, but, on a breakfast tray, it is cutlery. The "tools" in the graphic novelist's arsenal are limitless: ghostly parallel lines suggest speed or movement, a few well-placed lines on a face can capture the most complicated of emotions, and, as we have seen already, adding or deleting panels controls the pace of the narrative. What students recognize is that, because they do not have the power of the image to indicate good or evil objects, they must rely on words as modifiers, and their choices will determine what readers "see" while they read.

To illustrate the challenge of capturing in words all that appears in a single image, students try their hand in an activity I call "1000 Words." First, students once again convert the panels of a comic to prose narrative. Rather than history examples, though, we use the panels of a graphic novel they are reading in class. Although students are not surprised that complicated panels can take what seems like a thousand words to describe all that is depicted, they *are* surprised to discover that seemingly simple panels often require quite a few words as well. However, converting the panels to prose is not the end of the assignment. Efficiency and effectiveness in diction are very much at issue when I then ask students to revise their narratives and eliminate twenty percent of the words (a task made easy by their word processing program's word count feature).

As a result of working with graphic texts, students realize that, in their own assigned writing, they must attend to how they can use best the language tools at their disposal to create the kind of stylistic effects with words that comic artists can create with their "drawing" tools. Sentence length, variety, and complexity: each decision can convey a sense of pacing--of

deliberation or of enthusiasm. Alert to these choices, students practice moving their readers through essays, looking, for instance, to verbs that best conjure images of action or movement and modifiers that enable readers to visualize the ideas being expressed. It is useful at this juncture to remind students that visualizing is a significant component of the learning-to-read process. As Adrienne Gear explains, beginning readers use words to create pictures in their minds. These mental images enhance comprehension, especially when beginning readers move from picture books to chapter books. Although more adept readers tend to rely less on the ability to visualize, writers do well to incorporate "picture words" – or modifiers – given the increasingly visual nature of contemporary readers.

CHOICE FIVE: Organizing the Flow for the Reader's Understanding

McCloud's final choice addresses guiding a reader's very experience. For comic artists, the resulting "flow" is all about both the arrangement of panels on the page and the elements within each panel. In effect, flow involves "using moment, frame, image and word in tandem" (37). McCloud offers, "Choice of flow is partially about clearing your readers of obstacles to a smooth reading experience" (34). Thus, what the comic artist provides to the reader must be transparent, and it must attend to the reader's expectations in terms of content, genre, and mode. Flow, as McCloud instructs, means "being on the lookout for any part of the creative process that can HELP--or HINDER--that flow" (32). Comic artists, of course, have far more choice in terms of flow than writers. Although they must attend to such matters as how readers' eyes move across a page or the placement of captions and word balloons, they can vary the shape of panels and their arrangement. And, there is room for "experimentation," although McCloud warns that if "FOURTH WALL breaks" or "BORDERLESS images" distract or confuse readers, they are no friend of the artist. Regardless of their fewer options, student writers must likewise ensure that there is a clear sense of movement through their paragraphs. In the process, they learn to identify any constraints to the flow of their essays and to locate sites for experimentation and variation.

For students negotiating their way through the writing process, the demands of flow come later in the composition process. Students examine flow *in toto*, beginning with the overall development of their argument and moving to the organization of individual paragraphs. Thus, they might assess whether the inductive approach they selected best serves their purpose and audience or whether they should revise to a deductive model. Perhaps the "side-by-side" pattern they selected for their comparison is less successful than they originally thought, and reorganizing to "one side at a time" is a better option. In revising at the paragraph level, students confirm that they have included all the elements that compose a well-developed paragraph: is there a topic sentence that makes a claim, evidence that is compelling, a discussion of that evidence, and a concluding sentence that signals a transition to the reader?

Rather than discouraging experimentation with structure, I encourage students to engage in the writing equivalent, perhaps using a rhetorical question as a topic sentence in order to break the "fourth wall" or maybe restructuring a paragraph to begin with the warrant or to draw the reader's eye to a piece of data rather than a claim. This kind of global revision also affords an opportunity to revise local issues, for any modifications of organization or structure will

necessarily require students to look again at their individual sentences and the words that compose them.

When we are under the spell of reading a graphic novel, it is easy to overlook the art and significance of a choice as seemingly mundane as flow. Two related activities can remind students of this important component of comics composition. The first part of the activity involves taking a page of a graphic novel students have *not* read, copying it, and cutting apart the panels. Students are asked to reassemble the panels as they think they appeared in the original and explain their [re]assembly. Next, groups are given a single panel from a novel they have read and asked to discuss the flow of the individual panel and its place in the flow of panels that precede and follow. For example, in *Persepolis*, a single panel offers a brief history of Iran.

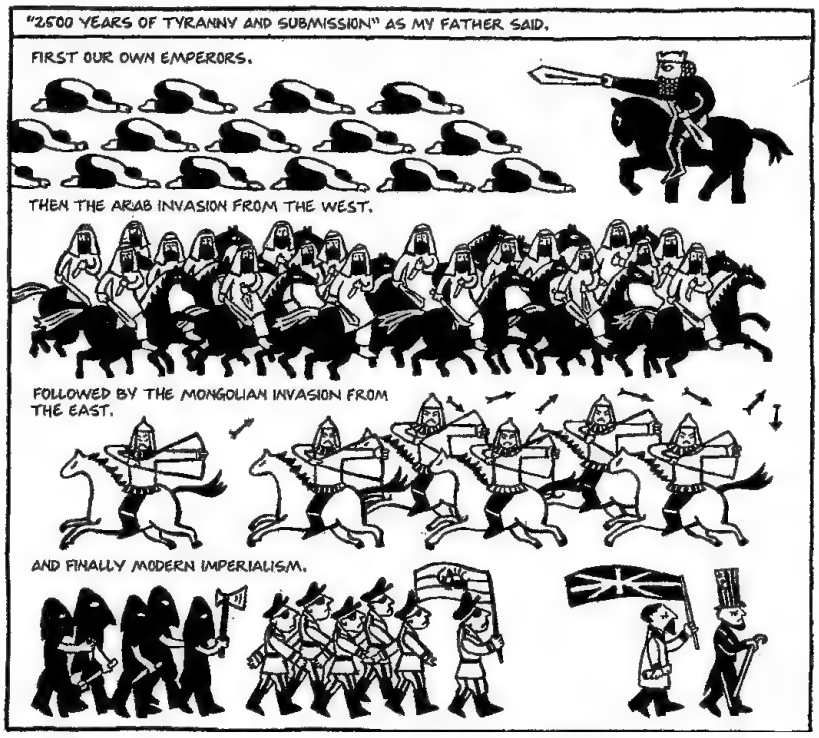
"2500 YEARS OF TYRANNY AND SUBMISSION" AS MY FATHER SAID.
FIRST OUR OWN EMPERORS.
THEN THE ARAB INVASION FROM THE WEST.
FOLLOWED BY THE MONGOLIAN INVASION FROM THE EAST.
AND FINALLY MODERN IMPERIALISM.

Fig. 6. Satrapi's panel illustrating the history of Iran (11).

Here, not only the moment of the panel, but the positioning of the images within it suggests the passage of time. Activities like these illustrate how flow is captured by the creators of graphic texts in multiple ways in both the entirety of a page, in the individual panel, as well as in the images within the panel. Such should be the movement of the reader through a traditional essay when each paragraph flows within itself and as part of the larger sequence.

To bridge my *Persepolis* activities with prose writings, I give students, working in small groups, paragraphs of a standard "comp class" essay or magazine article--any work of non-fiction prose—that have been cut up into sentences and ask them to assemble the pieces into what they imagine was the original order.[11] This activity thus focuses on the claim, data, warrant

model I espouse to student writers. Next, I distribute cut-up whole paragraphs from the same essay and ask students to place them in "proper" order. As a class, we discuss this global and local activity, considering how both paragraphs and essays flow. The next activity asks students, working with their original paragraph that is now reassembled to reflect the paragraph as it appeared in the essay, to revise that paragraph by reordering the elements in any way they choose. This task might require some additional words or phrases, and it might require clarifying what precedes and follows their particular paragraph. What this portion of the activity reveals to students are the kinds of choices about flow that they often ignore or believe they do not have. (I have done this activity using students' own essays as well, by selecting a paragraph from each student's own work, giving them the cut-up sentences, and having them reassemble and revise their own work in new ways.) As students often do when given permission to "experiment," we must also remind them of McCloud's constant attention to clarity, the mode of telling never impinging on the narrative. "[S]plit-second confusion," McCloud's words resonate with just about writing teachers, "yank readers out of the world of the story" (33), and this challenge can be as delicate to our teaching as it is to our composing practice, no matter the mode.

Everything is a Story

The traditional writing classroom reads prose essays, discusses those essays, and then reads about crafting prose essays. By reading and reading about comics and graphic novels, I want my students to realize that all writing--indeed, all communication--is at some level *narrative*, and, as Eisner emphasizes, all narrative is based in *story*. Inexplicably, call an assignment "writing a story" rather than "writing an argumentative essay," and the task is perceived as less daunting. The lessons McCloud teaches and on which I build are designed to make students excellent narrators of engaging argumentative stories. Crucial is this fact: first and foremost is the story, whether it is Kal-El being rocketed to earth before the destruction of Krypton, the role of the cotton gin in the history of the Civil War, the function of conceits in metaphysical poetry, or the process of germination after pollination. Student writers, like the artists they admire, are storytellers themselves. Time and again, we preach to students that the best way to become a good writer is to read good writing. In asking students to study McCloud's choices and apply them to the comics and graphic novels they so enjoy, we foster critical readers. When we align the process of making comics with the composing process, we create more critical writers. And, in employing comics and graphic novels in the writing classroom, we acknowledge further their proper place *across* the academic disciplines. The resulting impact--yes, *impact*--will alter how we teach and how students learn.

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[1] *The Council Chronicle*, "Using Comics and Graphic Novels in the Classroom" (September 2005).
[2] For example, Norton's *Picturing Texts* (Lester Faigley, Diana George, Anna Palchik, and Cynthia Selfe), Longman's *Beyond Words* (John Ruszkiewicz, Danial Anderson, and Christy Friend), and Pearson's *Envision in Depth* (Christine L. Alfano and Alyssa J. O'Brien)
[3] See, again, the work of Moje and Alvermann.
[4] As expected in a book by a comics artist, McCloud not only uses the comics format but such textual features as bold facing, italics, etc. When possible, I try to recreate that effect here.

[5] In this method for teaching writing, the comics or graphic novels selected for instruction are inconsequential. The approach can be applied to any text, not only those selected by the instructor but as well those suggested by the students. In my classes, I have used all or part of such texts as Spiegelman's *Maus*, Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Yang's *American Born Chinese*, and Eisner's *Contract with God*--as well as a variety of serialized titles from DC and Marvel Comics. I have also used selections from Joe Sacco's graphic journalism, including *Palestine*, Larry Gonick's cartoon histories, and the collection *9-11 Artists Respond*. The point is that any comic or graphic novel works.

[6] To distinguish making comics from writing an academic essay, I shall use the terms "comics process" and "composing process," although I am well aware that comics artists do, of course, compose.

[7] For example, I have used *Persepolis* as our graphic novel and incorporated essays on Iran, Islam, Persian customs or culture as models of school-based or academic prose.

[8] In discussing moment, McCloud goes into detail regarding transitions between panels by identifying six varieties, which can align to types of paragraphs. However, this kind of detail transcends this introduction to the notion of using comics in the composing process.

[9] It is important to recall that I am teaching academic writing and not creative writing, where additional detail is part of craftsmanship. That said, McCloud, a creative person of the first order, continually advocates concision and clarity in comics.

[10] The responses I share here are from my Methods of Teaching Composition, a course for teacher candidates in their junior or senior years. However, I complete the same activities with first-year students in a traditional "freshman comp" course. Because this latter group is less familiar with composition and rhetoric, I am required to be a bit more explicit in connecting the two processes.

[11] For this activity, I find on-line essays or articles that I can paste into a word file. Then, with all formatting "neutralized," I cut up the paragraphs (and any photographs, illustration, or charts) to distribute to students.

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SANE journal: Sequential Art Narrative in Education

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Article 5

1-1-2013

Rationale for The Prince

Nick Kremer
University of Missouri

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The Prince

By Niccolo Machiavelli (1532)
Adapted & Illustrated by Shane Clester (2011)
Published by Round Table Comics (2011)

Review & Rationale by Nick Kremer, University of Missouri

Grade Level and Audience

This graphic novel is recommended for high school English or Social Studies classes.

Plot Summary

The Prince was a treatise on governance written by Niccolo Machiavelli in the early sixteenth century. In a series of short passages, Machiavelli gives cynical yet pragmatic advice to an unnamed, newly-established prince on how to successfully rule his people. Machiavelli discusses the subtleties of governing style that should accompany the different types of principalities, offers insight on various aspects of military involvement, and ponders philosophical questions of leadership such as whether it is better to be feared than loved or whether the ends justify the means. Throughout, he cites historical examples of leaders from antiquity as evidence of the validity of his claims.

In adapting the work into a graphic novel, Shane Clester has utilized an abstracted, black-and-white cartoon style to accompany Machiavelli's original, translated prose. He portrays Machiavelli and a child prince as characters navigating through the advice of each of the work's serialized sections. In doing so, he seamlessly transitions throughout the piece from literal illustration of the text to visual metaphors of his own creation that interpret its meaning. Occasionally, he affords his characters some original, modern dialogue that humorously interacts with Machiavelli's archaic prose.

Strengths and Unique Characteristics of the Work

Clester's drawing authentically captures Machiavelli's sardonic tone in a way that enhances (rather than distracts from) the reading experience. Don't let the simplistic cover deceive you - the overall illustrative style is playful yet sophisticated, and certainly reverential to its source material, which Clester has clearly spent careful time considering.

Machiavelli's character (true to his reputation) is portrayed with delicious ambiguity – as soon as a reader has let down his guard and accepted the philosopher's advice unquestioned, he is immediately bombarded on the next page with the character's dark, brooding eyes and coy half-smile, prompting instant reconsideration of what one has just read. This visual dimension reminds us to constantly question the intentions of our narrator, when in pure prose, Machiavelli's voice is often perceived as omniscient.

Likewise, by giving the young prince a physical form of varying caricatures in the graphic novel, Clester creates a moldable archetype that represents the various outcomes of Machiavelli's advice. A prince may be pious or devious, capable or confused, effective or out of touch. These abstract, and sometimes subtle, variations are made powerfully concrete in this adaptation, helping readers to fully visualize the range of Machiavelli's vision.

The graphic adaptation also brings *The Prince*'s historical allusions to life for the reader, who, without thorough knowledge of ancient world history, might miss them otherwise. Accurate illustrations of attire, setting, and physical attributes helps to give color and distinction to this cast of supplemental characters who would otherwise be a footnote in the reading experience.

And though Clester's literal illustrations of the text are highly successful throughout, it is the points in the book where he offers his own original interpretation of Machiavelli's prose that most enhance the adaptation. Sometimes these are several panels long (an episode where raiding Vikings are surprised to find a prince that has proactively armed his people rather than hiding behind castle walls), while at other points they are metaphors in a single frame – Robin Hood giving up the fight because of his fear of the death penalty, a sword salesman going out of business because guns have become in vogue, or a chessboard of men being maneuvered by the hand of Fortune. All add layers of visual subtext to Machiavelli's work, making it infinitely easier for readers to accurately comprehend the layers of meaning in dense, antiquated prose.

Possible Objections

There are no foreseeable objections to the content within this novel. All violence is historical in nature and non-graphic in display, and language and sexuality are non-issues.

It might be a concern to some purists that though the translation of Machiavelli is true to his voice and style, the adaptation considerably abridges the original text. All 26 sections are included, but each has been edited down to its essential theses. This obviously makes for a faster read that is devoid of some of the details included in the full edition, though the essence of the work remains the same throughout.

Ideas for Thematic Braidings

Machiavelli is already a staple in many Government courses around the country, though sometimes teachers shy away from using his writing in primary source form because the prose is difficult for students to understand. Clester's graphic adaptation provides an excellent solution to this problem for all of the reasons listed above, allowing students the opportunity to still grapple with Machiavelli's own words while providing scaffolding for comprehension in the accompanying illustrations.

The Prince would work well in any dystopian literature unit, either read in-full over the course of a week, or read in intentionally-selected segments that compliment a longer

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companion novel. For example, it would be interesting to use Machiavelli as a philosophical lens by which to analyze the actions of *Animal Farm*'s Napoleon, or the Capital from *The Hunger Games*, or to compare/contrast the leadership styles of Ralph and Jack from *Lord of the Flies*.

Many of Shakespeare's histories and tragedies would also find symbiotic support when read alongside *The Prince*. Macbeth's rise to power, Julius Caesar's assassination, and the struggle for Lear's throne are all episodes begging Machiavellian inquiry. Many of these plays can also be found in graphic novel form (*Macbeth* – No Fear Shakespeare or John McDonald; *King Lear* – Garreth Hinds), giving teachers the option of comparing artistic treatment of source material as well as the thematic content therein.

Ideas for Implementation

Due to Machiavelli's organization of *The Prince*, the book can easily be read in its entirety or in sections. Teachers who are strapped for time may wish to tease out specific sections for the full class to consider, or utilize a "fishbowl" approach to reading, assigning different sections to different students who will then converge to share their portions of the book in small groups and come to understand the work as a whole from each other.

An excellent culminating assessment after reading the graphic adaption of *The Prince* would be requiring students to play the role of Clester – to choose a short section of the text and re-illustrate it on their own, choosing new metaphors, allusions, and interpretations of Machiavelli's prose. Conversely, if studying the book as part of a government theory unit, students could choose a different political philosopher – Locke, Rousseau, Madison, etc. – and adapt a passage of his work in graphic novella format. Doing so requires students to think similarly to Clester and critically engage with the text and illustrations in order to demonstrate deep understanding of the various authorial perspectives and corresponding content.

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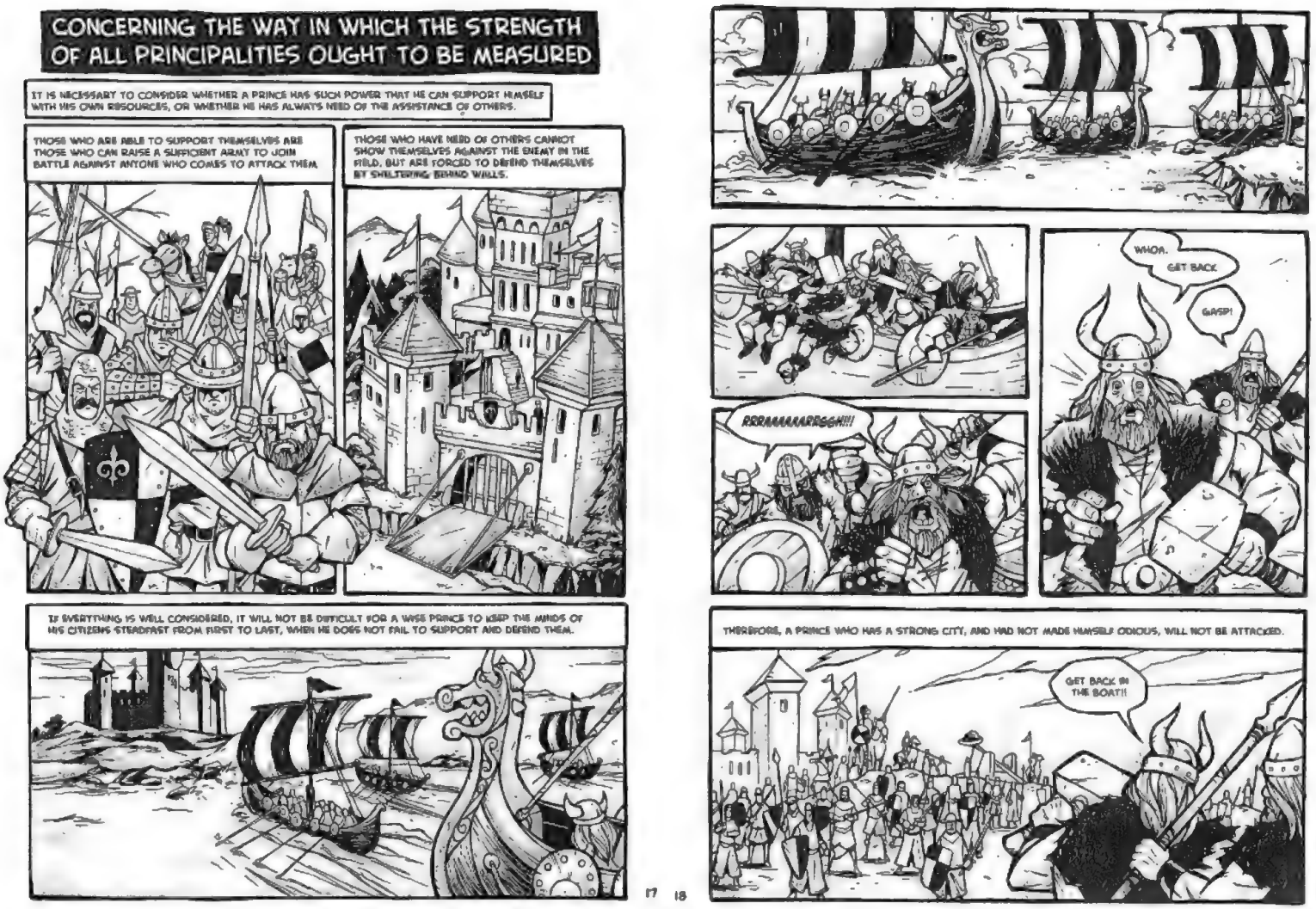
Sample Pages


CONCERNING THE WAY IN WHICH THE STRENGTH OF ALL PRINCIPALITIES OUGHT TO BE MEASURED
IT IS NECESSARY TO CONSIDER WHETHER A PRINCE HAS SUCH POWER THAT HE CAN SUPPORT HIMSELF WITH HIS OWN RESOURCES, OR WHETHER HE HAS ALWAYS NEED OF THE ASSISTANCE OF OTHERS.
THOSE WHO ARE ABLE TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES ARE THOSE WHO CAN RAISE A SUFFICIENT ARMY TO JOIN BATTLE AGAINST ANYONE WHO COMES TO ATTACK THEM.
THOSE WHO HAVE NEED OF OTHERS CANNOT SHOW THEMSELVES AGAINST THE ENEMY IN THE FIELD, BUT ARE FORCED TO DEFEND THEMSELVES BY SHELTERING BEHIND WALLS.
IF EVERYTHING IS WELL CONSIDERED, IT WILL NOT BE DIFFICULT FOR A WISE PRINCE TO KEEP THE MINDS OF HIS CITIZENS STEADFAST FROM FIRST TO LAST, WHEN HE DOES NOT FAIL TO SUPPORT AND DEFEND THEM.
17 18
WHOA.
GET BACK.
GASP!
RORAAAAARRSGH!!!
THEREFORE, A PRINCE WHO HAS A STRONG CITY, AND HAD NOT MADE HIMSELF ODIOUS, WILL NOT BE ATTACKED.
GET BACK IN THE BOAT!!

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HOW EXTRAORDINARILY THE WAYS OF GOD HAVE BEEN MANIFESTED BEYOND EXAMPLE.
YOU OUGHT TO DO THE REST.
GOD IS NOT WILLING TO DO EVERYTHING, AND THUS TAKE AWAY OUR FREE WILL...
...AND THAT SHARE OF GLORY WHICH BELONGS TO US.
END
50

SANE journal: Sequential Art Narrative in Education

Volume 1
Issue 3 *Visualizing and Visually Representing*

Article 6

1-1-2013

Rationale for Zahira's Paradise

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Zahra's Paradise

By Amir & Khalil
Published by First Second (2011)

Rationale by Hindi Krinsky, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Grade Level and Audience

This graphic novel is recommended for college-level readers in English, Comparative Literature, Political Science, History, and Media Studies classes.

Plot Summary

Zahra's Paradise provides a rich portrait of one Iranian family as they struggle to discover the fate of a family member who participated in Iran's Green Revolution. Less than two years ago, before the Arab Spring swept through the Middle East, millions of Iranians took to the streets to protest what was largely perceived as the fraudulent reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. This work not only documents the very real repercussions of participating in that historical event, but also captures the complexities of modern Iranian society. In this way, the narrative is multilayered and fluidly intertwines the many voices, both past and present, of modern Iran. By capturing these different perspectives, the creators of Zahara's Paradise offer Western readers an authentic glimpse into an often misunderstood society, its ancient heritage, and unique culture.

The novel opens with a foreboding prologue, a meditation that provides readers with a visceral awareness of the cruelty Iranians, especially young Iranians, have been subjected to by their government. This tone remains constant throughout the work, a dark shadow that clouds any sense of hope or redemption. Each chapter of this dark political tale captures a moment in time, a date of a blog entry made by the narrator, Hassan on his pro-democracy blog called Zahra's Paradise. The plot is embedded in these blog entries, each documenting the struggles experienced by Hassan and his mother, Zahra, as they search for his Bob-Marley-loving-19-year-old brother Mehdi who has gone missing after the protests.

In their search for Mehdi, Hassan and Zahra look for him all over Tehran; they check Freedom Square (only to find a tragic lost shoe and stains of human blood), the hospital (where wounded protestors are dragged out of their beds and carted off to prison) and the morgue (where face after face of young protestor lies in contorted agony). Throughout their search, they encounter grieving mothers, obstructive bureaucrats, and violent Basij (Iran's paramilitary militia). Their numerous attempts to obtain information about Mehdi through diplomatic channels are completely unsuccessful as Hassan writes in his blog "people [are] vanishing before our eyes with no record, no paper trail, no name, no receipt- just a blur…this blog is all that is left of them." This theme of namelessness is repeatedly revisited throughout the work. In fact, one can view Zahra's Paradise, a work

of historical fiction, as an effort to name names, to match real identities and real lives to the common struggles experienced by the people of Iran. For example, while searching for Mehdi at Elvin Prison, the site where Iranian-Canadian photojournalist Zahra's Kazemi was beaten to death by an interrogating judge, a bystander remarks: "They think they can silence our women, beat our Zahras down or blot out her memory." Unsuccessful at each junction, the duo eventually visits Behesht-e Zahra (Zahra's Paradise) a vast graveyard that is the final resting place of residents of Tehran, victims of the Iran-Iraq War, and the Basij's latest shooting targets: the young protestors.

Throughout the novel images of brutality and death are ironically juxtaposed with the symbols of daily religious life in Iran, offering sharp commentary on the religious zealotry of Iran's leadership that purports to be the "flagbearer of humanity" when in reality it "cannibalizes its young." One young protestor recounts to Hassan his brutal rape at Elvin, describing "I was raped! Raped in the name of their God, in the name of their Iran! Raped in the name of their prophet…It is their Islamic republic—not me—that is covered in filth!" This rejection of the mullahs is further emphasized by the deep and persistent clash between modern and traditional ways of life. For example, on a cab ride through the city, Hassan and Zahra drive by industrial cranes being used for public hangings. This image is deeply disturbing and is readily recalled when Hassan later comments that "our old kings used to gouge out our eyes. The new ones want to pull the plug on the Internet to obliterate our reflection."

Ultimately, the duo relies on the kindness of fellow Iranians to discover Mehdi's fate. These individuals are strangers who selflessly aide the Alavi family in their quest. This generosity of strangers illuminates the unity found among Iranians, their common resentment of the regime and their resistance to its acts of violence and terror. For example, in one chance encounter Hassan meets the flirtatious and bodacious Sepideh at a local internet café. She later discovers, after a night of passionate lovemaking, that her brutish (and married) lover is not only deeply involved with the regime, but may have information about Mehdi. At her own peril, she copies the cache of information right off his computer and sends it directly to Hassan. Enthused by this rare access to the inner workings of the regime, Hassan and his friends work tirelessly to decipher the data. In the process, they unveil the labyrinthine system of the Revolutionary Court, a monster of bureaucracy depicted as a pair of the mullahs' cavernous jaws outstretched to consume the incoming lines of helpless prisoners.

While working through this material, Hassan eventually discovers his brother's fate. Evidence of Mehdi's death is so significant to his family and friends, yet the entire episode is reduced to a nameless, faceless, and purposeless number. There is no reason offered. There is no story told. Mehdi is simply a number that has been deleted. The tragic nature of Mehdi's death resembles the experience of Holocaust victims, who like Mehdi are buried in forgotten mass graves, condemned to suffer not only the brutality of their senseless deaths, but an eternal loss of identity, a perpetual death of namelessness.

Fortunately, Mehdi is soon saved from suffering this fate. Again it is through the assistance of strangers that Hassan and Zahra manage to reclaim Mehdi's body from the

bowels of Behesht-e Zahra and give him a proper burial. Though the bureaucrats attempt to reframe Mehdi's death as an act of martyrdom, it is Zahra, who in her tremendous grief and sadness, martyrs her son, sacrificing Mehdi not to the iron jaws of the regime, but on the altar of freedom and resistance. In this way, Zahra gives Mehdi, a silent character throughout this text, a voice, a name, and ultimately, a cause. She urges him to "speak of the end of time, the end of life, speak of the end of Iran, the end of Islam! Speak that the world may know that all of Iran's sons have died and lie dead in you…for am I not Zahra, and is this not my paradise?"

Strengths and Unique Characteristics of the Work

Zahra's Paradise is a moving composite of social activism, political corruption, and daily life in modern-day Iran. Its strength is its ability to capture a complex and nuanced picture of Iranian society: its Western influences, Persian heritage, and Islamic traditions. This work is also structured around a popular anti-regime eponymously titled blog. In this way, the creators offer the reader insight into not only how technology has changed the general landscape of Iranian culture, but the potent power of social media to harness political struggle and even wage digital protest against the regime.

Possible Objections

There are several possible objections to Zahra's Paradise. In addition to the general depictions of horror and death, there is also a brutal rape scene and an explicit sexual encounter.

Ideas for Thematic Braidings

Like Zahra's Paradise there are a number of excellent texts that provide insight into modern Iranian life. For example, the award-winning graphic novel Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi, Anahita Firouz's historical novel In the Walled Gardens, and Reading Lolita in Tehran by Azar Nafisi. In addition to illuminating the richness of Persian culture, Zahra's Paradise is also a personal story, a "rage against the machine" epic that highlights the struggle of the common man against an inhumane and iron-fisted regime. This theme is reflected in many works of fiction, particularly science fiction, including Ray Bradbury's classic Fahrenheit 451, Margret Atwood's haunting A Handmaid's Tale, and Alan Moore's excellent graphic novel V for Vendetta. In its broad inclusion of many different Iranian voices and coverage of modern political events, Zahra's Paradise is also reminiscent of Joe Sacco's two landmark journalistic graphic novels, Palestine and Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia. Zahra's Paradise also focuses on the struggle to redefine tradition in a modern age, to negotiate the chasm between the old and new worlds. There are many works that elucidate these intersections of meaning-making like Craig Thompson's Habibi, E.M. Forester's A Passage to India, and Waiting for the Barbarians by J.M. Coeteze.

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Ideas for Implementation

Depending on the discipline and subject, there are a number of innovative ways to integrate Zahra's Paradise into a curricular program. One can use the latest current events in Iran (for example, its nuclear armament and economic sanctions) or news from the Middle East in general (for example, the Arab Spring, or the revolts in Syria) to springboard into the work. Or, one can take an entirely different approach and discuss the changing role of social media and how communication has evolved rapidly in the past few years. To explore this angle, one can show the viral video of 'Neda,' an anonymous Iranian girl dying in the streets of Tehran after being shot by the Basij during the Green Revolution. This powerful clip can then be used to situate Zahra's Paradise and discover how "the dreams of an entire generation fade behind the last flutterings of Neda's eyes."

Awards

Nominated for an Eisner Award in the Best Digital Comic category
Publishers Weekly Best Comics title for 2011
Booklist Editors' Choice: Adult Books for Young Adults, 2011
A *YALSA* Great Graphic Novel for Teens – Top Ten
A *Graphic Novel Reporter* Best of 2011
A *PW* Best Book of the Year
A Booklist Top Ten Adult Graphic Novel of the Year

Reviews

"A heartbreaking story...not just about tyranny, loss and grief, but a celebration of the will to live." -Azar Nafisi author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*

"Like Maus and Persepolis...Zahra's Paradise puts a human face on a time of grief and unrest. Unlike those books, the time in question is now..." -NPR

"Gorgeous and compelling. Zahra's Paradise is more than a graphic novel. It is a testament to the unbreakable will of a people ready to bear any cost to shake off the yoke of oppression." -Reza Aslan, author of *No god but God*

Resources/References

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Volume 1
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Article 7

1-1-2013

Rationale for The Dark Knight Returns

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The Dark Knight Returns

By Frank Miller

Published by DC Comics (1986)

Review & Rationale by Chris Snellgrove, Auburn University

Grade Level and Audience

The Dark Knight Returns is recommended for advanced high school senior classes as well as freshman college classes.

Plot Summary

The story of *The Dark Knight Returns* takes place in Gotham City's future, where Batman has retired his superhero persona and lives restlessly as Bruce Wayne. This retirement has lasted ten years by the beginning of the comic, and as a result, Gotham City has been overrun by a violent gang known only as the Mutants. Wayne dons the cape and cowl again in response to the horrors of gang violence, and soon intervenes when Harvey Dent (the criminal formerly known as Two-Face), his face finally healed through complicated surgeries funded by Wayne, returns to his criminal ways.

The returned Batman then attempts to end the threat of The Mutants by fighting their leader in open combat. However, the 56-year old Batman is nearly killed, and only escapes with his life thanks to a 13-year old girl named Carrie Kelley. She soon becomes the new Robin, and with her help (along with a final favor from soon-to-be retired Police Commissioner James Gordon) he frees the Mutant leader from prison, breaking many of his bones in a public rematch that is witnessed by the violent gang.

The gang (now calling themselves The Sons of Batman) uses their violent and often lethal methods to fight crime within Gotham City. Meanwhile, the new police commissioner issues an arrest warrant for Batman, even as the Joker murders a TV audiencemember during an interview intended to prove his sanity. He escapes to a circus where he is defeated by Batman and Robin; the former breaks the Joker's neck, but is unable to kill him. The Joker, however, twists his own neck, killing himself and framing Batman as a murderer.

Meanwhile, Superman (the last officially-sanctioned superhero, since he is willing to serve as a tool of the American government) stops a nuclear warhead from Russia intended for America. The blast weakens Superman, and its electromagnetic pulse blacks out most of America, including Gotham. Leading the Sons of Batman on horseback, Batman keeps the city safe. However, the president claims that Batman is out of control, and sends Superman to stop him.

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With the help of governmental fugitive Green Arrow (complete with a synthetic Kryptonite arrow), Batman defeats Superman, but soon succumbs to a heart attack. However, it is revealed that Batman faked his own death so that he could begin training the Sons of Batman into a crime fighting army in an underground cave. This army is intended to eventually carry on the self-styled war on crime that Batman had begun.

Strengths and Unique Characteristics of the Work

The Dark Knight Returns is rife with political commentary and satire, going so far as to include a president highly resembling Ronald Reagan in a dystopian future. It analyzes well the central theme that there is not a perfect overlap between legality and justice: as Batman reminds Superman, "sure, we're criminals…we've always been criminals. We have to be criminals" (Miller 135). In this sense, Miller offers a controversial defense of fascism, an expansion of Batman's earlier implication that the rights afforded to criminals do not serve to protect society: "You've got rights. Lots of rights. Sometimes I count them just to make myself feel crazy" (Miller 45).

All of this provides fodder for critical discussion, of course, ranging from what distinction remains (if any) between Batman and the criminals he battles, and to the dangers of a figure such as Superman rather literally following "the American way" (regardless of its direction). Miller broaches ethical conundrums as well, explicating that many criminals such as The Joker would either not exist or not perpetuate crime in the absence of a figure such as Batman. Miller challenges the reader to determine whether, morally speaking, Batman has saved more lives than he has inadvertently injured and/or killed.

Possible Objections

Perhaps the most common objection to this text is its arguably glorification of violence. In embracing the fascistic tropes underlying the texts, Miller explicitly argues that the violence of individuals such as Batman has more of an impact on reducing criminal activity than more peaceful, legal means. The targets of the violence may cause objection as well: in addition to fighting the "superstitious and cowardly lot" that comprise his foes, Batman injures police officers, endangers a 13-year old child, and is willing to kill a defenseless Joker (whom he has already mutilated with a batarang).

Of course, the violence is not limited to Batman. The Mutants cause much mayhem, including murdering the mayor, placing a grenade into a woman's purse, cutting a taxi passenger's face, and so on. Before Batman actively tries to reform them, the Sons of Batman are also responsible for extremist violence, including cutting the hands from would-be robbers. It should be noted that most of the more gruesome violence is implied, rather than shown. However, it may still prove disturbing to some readers.

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Ironically, political objections to *The Dark Knight Returns* are likely to come from both sides of the aisle: while liberals will be horrified (perhaps rightly so) by the outright embrace of fascism and violence on the part of the titular hero, conservatives will likely be taken aback at the naked blame placed on Ronald Reagan (and, by extension, Republicans) on American expansionism, warmongering, and the repurposing of superheroes in order to support a national agenda.

There are also brief implications of sex/sexuality, as with Selena Kyle (formerly Catwoman) running an escort service that the Joker exploits to gain control of an Army general. There is also mild profanity throughout the work, mostly limited to words such as "damn," "hell," and "shit." All told, the language is not worse than a standard PG-13 film.

Deleted:

Ideas for Implementation

One of the obvious gateways into Batman for many students will be Christopher Nolan's recent Batman movies—Batman Begins, The Dark Knight, and the upcoming The Dark Knight Rises. It would be helpful to begin with a discussion regarding these movies, and the political issues surrounding them. For instance, Batman's decision to spy on half of Gotham's citizens in The Dark Knight clearly paralleled concerns about surveillance on private citizens through programs such as The Patriot Act, and this broached larger issues of justice versus ethics concerning the heroism of Batman. And while the plotline for The Dark Knight Rises has been kept well hidden, recent trailers show that the antagonists (Tom Hardy's Bane and Anne Hathaway's Catwoman) echo many of the sentiments from the Occupy Wall Street protests, complete with a battle against Batman on Wall Street itself. This, too, broaches larger philosophical concerns regarding the nature of justice, implying that while Batman may have strived to fight for everyone, he has effectively created a city optimized for wealthy white people—a city for those few like him, rather than everyone else.

While that may seem like a large sidebar discussion to the comic itself, it helps to highlight the relevance of comic characters in general (and comics in particular) as tools to illuminate politics and social issues. It also helps to highlight some of the malleable irony of Batman's character as a reflection of changing politics: while Miller firmly claims that the vigilante ethos of Batman requires a kind of ultra-right wing fascism, he is poised as a clear counterpoint to a Reagan-esque president whose concerns over foreign affairs (primarily with Russia) has kept him from handling domestic issues such as gang violence. Nolan's The Dark Knight goes on to explicate that the domestic surveillance Batman engages in (again, undeniably echoing the Bush-era politics) is morally wrong, and something that may corrupt Batman. This notion of corruption is intriguing, however, because it would not make him like his enemies—like the chaotic forces of Two Face and the Joker. Rather, it would make him like his allies, which would go against the ethos of the antihero vigilante.

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The Dark Knight Returns, then, provides an excellent opportunity to explore the allure of the vigilante hero, as well as the notion of the antihero. While Batman has always been a vigilante character, his image was often softened over time: he is portrayed as a friend to the police, and later having a teenage sidekick in the form of the colorful Robin. This reached its apex with the classic Batman and Robin TV show, starring Adam West and Burt Ward. While undeniably entertaining, this show reduced the character (originally conceived as frightening enough to intimidate the "cowardly and superstitious lot" of the criminal underworld) into pure camp, a reputation that many credit Miller with dispelling. This was done by bringing Batman back into the antihero fold, one that was more to the tastes of the 80's popular culture consumer. Batman struggles against the police, battles Superman, and crosses lines with violence (he uses a gun to subdue one gang member, unnecessarily breaks many of the Mutant Leader's bones, and throws a batarang into the Joker's eye). Even the inevitable new Robin is present in part because the old one died. All in all, Miller's work is a masterstroke of returning Batman to his grim, vigilante/antihero state. Why, though, is this appealing?

This can form the crux of many great discussions with your class. One of the often-unspoken conceits of vigilante characters is that they simply would not be necessary if conventional forms, arbiters, and organizations of justice worked better. Miller portrays Batman in opposition to police, presidents, and superheroes in order to articulate (with admittedly little subtlety) that the codified and quantified forms of justice eventually bear little resemblance to what they are built around. Batman posits that he is the necessary force that is able to circumvent a legal system that coddles felons. Of course, his ultimate conceit is that he knows what justice is—and that our system of checks and balances concerning the law has created an environment of corruption, cronyism, and criminality. This is a blunt take on Batman (and vigilantes in general) that many students may not have consciously thought about previously: Batman and other vigilante figures are diametrically opposed to the American justice system, in so far as they find it impotent and unable to protect citizens and punish criminals.

Miller uses Superman as an example of illustrating that there is not much choice for the so-called superhero. Superman, ever-striving to fight for "the American way," becomes a tool used to fight America's foreign wars, a tool whose actions nearly precipitate nuclear war within the comic. If one wishes to avoid that corruption, one must be opposed to the country itself. Students should be encouraged to puzzle out the seeming paradox of Miller's Batman—he essentially fights against America in order to save its citizens from their own country. However, the text is unclear if he is simply a reactionary force (a fascist counterbalance to what he perceives as a soft approach to criminals) or able to generate alternatives to his country's corruption…short of getting young men and women to enlist in his army, of course.

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Ideas for Thematic Braidings

If the class is focusing on either graphic novels, *Dark Knight Returns* serves well alongside Alan Moore's acclaimed *Watchmen*. Watchmen shares much of Miller's cynicism of 80's America (including conflict with Russia), but dispenses with the kind of Great Man hero-worship that Miller engages in. Rather, Moore opens the door to the more psychoanalytical view of so-called "superheroes"—that anyone who puts on a mask rather than a badge or other public service uniform is, psychologically speaking, damaged goods. The obvious discussion that flows from this would center on 1) whether Miller's Batman is truly deranged and 2)whether his effectiveness at restoring order to a chaotic city implies a deeper critique of society…that its madness can only be understood (and ultimately cured) by a madman.

In a World Literature class, Dark Knight Returns would best be situated as part of a larger curriculum and discussion of America's fascination with the vigilante. I would recommend beginning with James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, focusing on how Natty Bumppo represented America's fascination (soon to expand and evolve) with the outsider hero, later transformed into the more familiar archetype of the cowboy. World War I, however, began an interesting schism between literature and culture: war propaganda (particularly through film) focused on the national hero being a patriotic, self-sacrificial soldier, even as American writers (perhaps most notably Ernest Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms*) wrote of the horror and banality of war. Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* helps illustrate the intersection of culture and literature: the masses are made very aware of the horror and futility of war, even as 60's counterculture paints returning American soldiers as enemies to those at home and abroad. Only then do we have the arrival of the modern antihero, one who is often situated against failed systems of authority.

Miller's Batman is very much part of this: the character speaks to our collective desire to force the world into making sense. However, in that attempt, vigilantes (and readers, through our tacit support of their actions) take on the same authoritarian role that they are nominally rebelling against, which brings students back to the natural discussion of where the vigilante's authority derives from, and why it has a more credible ethos than the authority of others (if, in fact, that is truly the case). Thus, Batman encapsulates the perfect paradox of vigilante justice: just as Batman's vigilantism never truly satisfied his compulsive need to bring criminals to justice, the act of vigilantism cannot satisfy those seeking to escape the trappings of authority because it involves becoming an authority. Batman attempts to rhetorically sidestep this paradox by noting that "we've always been criminals," but this admission has certainly not shaken his belief that he has the right to impose his will upon other criminals.

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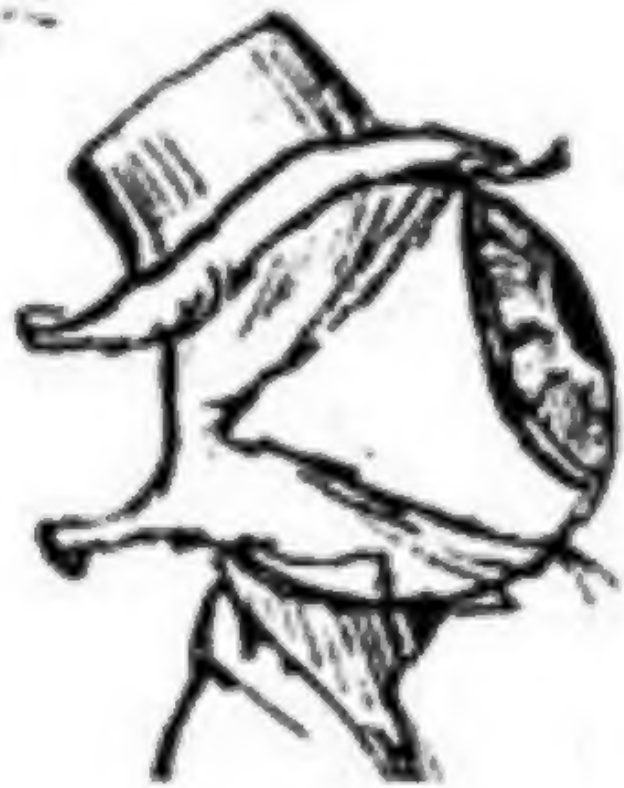

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Visualizing and Visually Representing